



CITY OF DOVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE MASTER PLAN

2020 Culture and Recreation Chapter

Enjoy, Play, Relax, and Have Fun

RECREATION CHAPTER

Enjoy, Play, Relax, and Have Fun

Prepared for:

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| SECTION 1: TIME FOR CHANGE | 4 |
| PURPOSE AND GOALS | 5 |
| OUR APPROACH | 5 |
| ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE | 6 |
| DATA COLLECTION PROCESS | 6 |
| SECTION 2: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES | 8 |
| THEMES AND TRENDS | 8 |
| EXISTING PLANS AND RESOURCES | 16 |
| MAP ANALYSIS | 20 |
| SITE ASSESSMENTS | 30 |
| SECTION 3: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT | 32 |
| METHODS | 32 |
| EVENTS | 34 |
| OUTCOMES | 36 |
| RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN | 46 |
| APPENDIX A: LIST OF ALL MAPS (11X17) | 70 |
| APPENDIX B: OUTREACH RESULTS | 71 |
| APPENDIX C: COMPLETED SITE ASSESSMENT SHEETS | 72 |

Section 1: Time for Change

This section describes the role culture and recreation play in enhancing quality of life and the approach taken to this Master Plan chapter update.

Section

1

Traditional recreation master plan chapter provide municipalities with a broad range of recommendations for enhancing parks and recreational opportunities; however, arts and cultural activities are often absent from the process. This document, written 11 years after the last update, integrates art and culture with recreation and describes a holistic planning approach. The term cultural recreation is used throughout this chapter to describe the blend of arts, culture, and recreation. These valuable services provide individual and community benefits and incorporating them together will further the City’s vision of becoming a healthy, active, and culturally diverse city.

Recreational opportunities in Dover include the City’s parks, programs, and recreational facilities. These all play a considerable role in creating healthy and safe neighborhoods by providing a variety of vital community benefits. These benefits include helping to preserve natural areas, places of cultural significance, improving public health, and enhancing the overall quality of life for its residents.

The City’s parks and recreational facilities give adults and children a place to relax, make friends, and enjoy their City. Studies show that living close to a park correlates to higher rates of physical activity in both adults and children, lower rates of obesity, increased levels of economic development, and improved mental health and well-being.¹



Henry Law Park Splashpad
[Photo Credit: Shayna Sylvja]

“Inherent in the concept of local public parks is the idea that all members of a community — regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, ability level, or socioeconomic status — have access to a safe place to gather, play, exercise, and enjoy being outdoors.”

– American Planning Association

[Source: Prioritizing Urban and Community Parks Can Boost Health and Social Equity]

Dover offers a wide variety of arts and cultural opportunities. The Cochecho Arts Festival, produced by the Greater Dover Chamber of Commerce, hosts live music, the downtown farmers market, and the dinner and a movie series. The Dover Art Walk is a grassroots event run by the Dover Art Walk subcommittee held on the first Friday of every month throughout the year where local galleries, merchants, neighbors, and friends join in celebrating the Arts. Apple Harvest Day is one of the community’s most popular events, which attracts more than 60,000 people each year, and features over 300 vendors, food, and live entertainment. An attractive downtown provides shopping and dining options that highlight a range of rich cultural experiences.

Dover is home to several private and non-profit organizations that support the arts community including Wrong Brain, the Strand Theater, the Children’s Museum of New Hampshire, and the Woodman Institute Museum. Public art can be found throughout the City. Installations and locations include the whale’s tail on the indoor pool, several large murals in the downtown, and an array of military monuments. Street

¹ “Prioritizing Urban and Community Parks Can Boost Health and Social Equity.” American Planning Association. Accessed March 16, 2020. <https://planning.org/content/content/9105432/>.

performers, artists, dancers, and musicians can be found performing, or busking, in areas surrounding the Cochecho and One Washington Center Mills throughout the summer season.

The City's cultural recreation assets are an important component to the future growth and success of the community. These resources also contribute to local, regional, and state economies. They draw visitors to the area, create interest among developers, and entice others to relocate to the area. While the City has dedicated funding to maintain these amenities, it will be important to designate a realistic budget amount as time goes on to ensure they are kept in good, safe, and working order.



Purpose and Goals

This update expands upon the 2009 chapter by identifying strengths, understanding challenges, and refining past objectives. It integrates arts and culture as part of what it means to recreate. Finally, this chapter will help Dover continue to build upon and connect its recreational resources, explore new opportunities and initiatives, and be a great place to live.

The goals established here are consistent to those that were developed as part of the prior two plans (2000 and 2009), and will be used as a guide to ensure that Dover:

- Provides a broad range of recreational facilities and programming opportunities for the citizens of Dover now and in the future.
- Guarantees that recreational facilities and programming opportunities are appropriately designed to include people of all ages and abilities regardless of their economic status.
- Develops creative solutions to integrate public art, in various forms, throughout the community.
- Thinks creatively in its approach to each obstacle facing recreation, not only to meet public expectations but to exceed them.
- Maintains all existing parks, athletic fields, and facilities in an efficient and timely manner.
- Enhances its parks, facilities, and programming in a way that meets current needs and anticipates changes in demand and preference.
- Promotes its recreational assets, programs, plans, and achievements through innovative methods.

The recommendations, detailed in Section 4 of this chapter, are intended to guide the City in its efforts to achieve the greatest success over the next ten years.

Our Approach

Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) was selected to work with the community to implement a robust outreach process coupled with a data-driven approach. Detailed information about each park, connectivity, demographic characteristics, art, local values and needs were included as part of an assessment to prioritize decisions, and successfully portray and implement Dover's vision and mission.

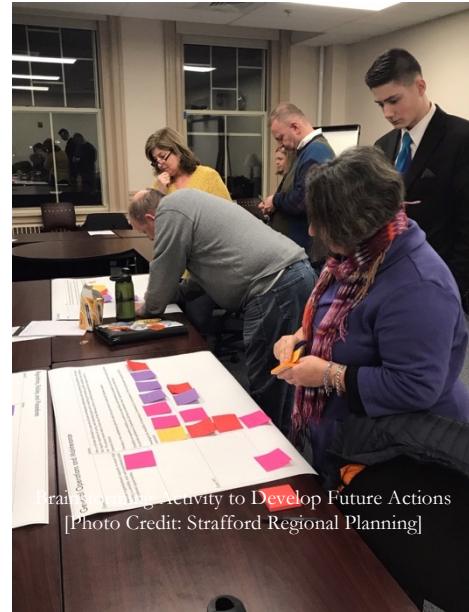
The City developed an inclusive process that was conducted in an open, clear, and transparent manner using the experience of local decision-makers, staff departments, officials, steering committee members, and residents. Software used for the level of service analysis, namely GIS mapping exercises and resource site analyses, were used for the gap analysis to help identify projects and programs to meet current and future needs of the community and to emphasize the City's desire to support cultural recreation. It celebrates the excitement and passion that Dover residents and municipal staff have for their community's cultural and recreation spaces.

As the process approached its conclusion, Dover - like much of the world - adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic. While businesses closed, public spaces for recreation and community art took on new importance. Trails and outdoor spaces saw an increase in visitors while cultural events such as art walks and museum tours shifted to virtual platforms. Similarly, staff planners, the Planning Board, and Master Plan Steering Committee moved online to hold meetings and review the draft plan. The result has generated new thinking and interest in how we engage with community members and public spaces.

Establishment of the Master Plan Steering Committee

The Master Plan Steering Committee was tasked with providing overall direction and guidance throughout the development of this chapter. Early in the process, the committee defined goals, identified data gaps, and advised the public outreach and engagement process. Monthly coordination meetings were held to review progress and ensure everyone was working towards common objectives. The steering committee played a vital role in helping to determine which of the 2009 chapter recommendations were still relevant and what new recommendations were needed.

The Steering Committee's membership included representatives of the Arts Commission, Planning Board, City Council, Recreation Advisory Board and Pool Committee. The addition of Arts Commission volunteers and their connection with the arts master planning process lent greater inclusion of arts and culture into a chapter that was previously only focused on recreation. Combining arts and cultural recommendations with recreation actions and noting how they interplay together was largely driven by members of the steering committee.



Participants working together to develop future actions
[Photo Credit: Strafford Regional Planning]

“Participation from the Steering Committee brings more value to the Master Plan update process because they each have a volunteer role in the community whether on a recreation committee, City Council, Planning Board, Arts Commission, and each brought a thoughtful perspective.”

- Donna Benton, AICP, City Planner

Additional meetings were held with City staff, and representatives of key volunteer groups, including the Recreation Advisory Committee, Dover Arts Commission, and Community Trail Subcommittee. At these meetings, the groups were informed of the process and ensured content within the chapter was in line with the City's overall vision.

Data Collection Process

The data collection process for this chapter was completed in two phases. First, an inventory was developed of all existing cultural and recreation data, conditions, and trends, and perform a series of analyses to generate a comprehensive evaluation and assessment of existing conditions and future opportunities. Results from this process can be found in Section 2. The second phase was the implementation of several public outreach and engagement events aimed at obtaining feedback and input from residents of all ages. Results from this process can be found in Section 3. Used together, the City was able to produce a master plan that inspires, creates excitement, and showcases the abundance of recreational and cultural opportunities that Dover residents have access to.



Fishing at Willand Pond
[Photo Credit: Kyle Pimental]



Henry Law Park
[Photo Credit: Shayna Sylvia]



Dover Community Trailhead at Transportation Center
[Photo Credit: Donna Benton]

Section 2: Existing Conditions and Future Opportunities

Section

2

This section presents the results of a comprehensive needs assessment that will enable the City to address existing and projected needs through future planning efforts.

The inventory and analysis component of this chapter is intended to provide a better understanding of recreation themes and trends, existing plans and resources, and opportunities for the next ten years.

Themes and Trends

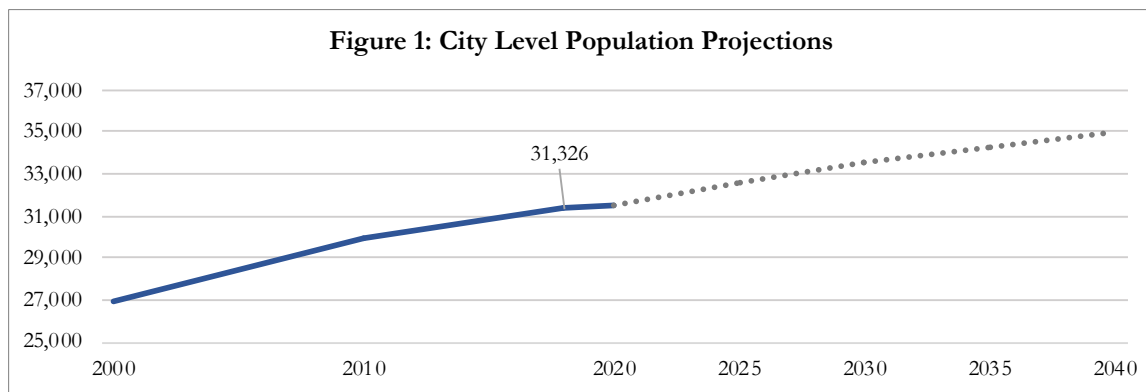
The identification of trends and shifts in environmental and socio-economic conditions helps provide critical insight for future planning decisions. There are countless and ever-changing trends that could be used to analyze and draw conclusions about the shifts in recreation preferences and participation. However, for the purpose of this chapter an informed decision based on an extensive public engagement process was followed. This process focused on changes to demographics, health and wellness issues, technology competency, funding, tourism, and the creative economy.

Demographics

This demographic profile, which includes information on current and future population growth, age distribution, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, and disabilities, was compiled in March 2020 using the latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau in conjunction with the Office of Strategic Initiatives (OSI) demographic cohort-component projections report.

POPULATION

According to the most recent population estimates, prepared by OSI, Dover's estimated population in 2018 was 31,326 – making it the fifth most populous municipality in the state, behind only Manchester, Nashua, Concord, and Derry. Forecasts of future population growth show a steady increase of about 2.1% every five years starting in 2020. If this rate of growth continues, Dover could expect roughly 3,589 new residents by 2040.



As Dover's population grows, there will likely be impacts to the City's recreation system. Increased population density in proximity to outdoor recreation sites may cause overcrowding, resulting in a reduction in the quality of nature-based experiences. Demand and usage of recreation sites and facilities will continue to rise, placing additional stress on existing infrastructure. To address projected population growth appropriate funding will

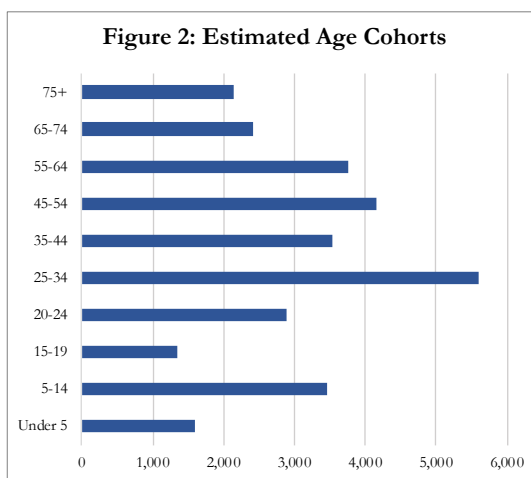
be needed to adequately fund preventative maintenance of parks and facilities and ensure that replacement schedules are followed to improve safety, increase accessibility, and expand basic services.

AGE

Consistent with the 2017 U.S. Census American Community Survey, New Hampshire has the second highest median age in the country – trailing only Maine. Roughly 20 percent of the state’s entire population is 60 years old or older. In Dover, there are an estimated 6,315 residents over the age of 60, which is approximately 20 percent of the total population, mimicing the statewide trend. The [2019-2023 New Hampshire Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan \(SCORP\)](#), emphasizes that recreation planners and providers must accommodate a growing active senior population, who will become more interested in individual health and wellness, easy and safe access to recreation opportunities, and an increase in social and family activity experiences.

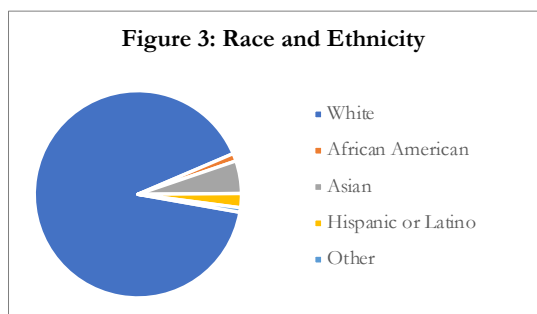
Despite having a significant senior population, the City is one of the youngest communities in the state. Dover has a median age of 36.6 with nearly 28 percent of the total population between the ages of 20 and 34 (refer to Figure 2).

In a research publication released by the University of New Hampshire Carsey School of Public Policy titled “[More Young Adult Migrants Moving to New Hampshire from Other US Locations](#),” new Census estimates show that the annual domestic migration gain was 5,900 between 2013-2017 – with the primary increases among those in their 20s and 30s. Southern portions of the state including Strafford, Rockingham, and Hillsborough counties have experienced the most considerable growth, largely as a result of their proximity to Massachusetts.



To continue attracting a younger demographic, programming and outdoor activities that advocate for healthy lifestyles need to be promoted. Popular activities among young adults include social sport leagues (volleyball, pick-up basketball, flag football, softball), running clubs, biking, kayaking, fishing, hiking, camping, swimming, pickleball, and fitness programs (crossfit, spin class, yoga, pilates). Specialized classes for women during and after pregnancy (“mommy fitness”) have become much more widespread in recent years, and offer young mothers assistance with training, nutrition, and lifestyle guidance.

RACE/ETHNICITY



Race and ethnicity data accessed through the U.S. Census 2017 American Community Survey indicate that Dover’s racial composition is predominately white. New Hampshire is widely recognized as one of the least diverse states in the country; however, the City is home to a slightly higher percentage of Asian Americans. Figure 3 illustrates the racial and ethnic composition of the City.

While New Hampshire, and its municipalities, remain mostly white, the U.S. Census Bureau predicts that, by 2044, America will no longer have a single ethnic

majority and will grow increasingly more diverse in the years to follow. The NH SCORP suggested that shifts in ethnicity and age will result in changes in outdoor recreation preferences relative to types of activities, frequency, style, and location.

“Park and recreation agencies work daily to ensure that the unique power of parks is a reality in every community across the country, especially our most vulnerable and underserved populations, including racial and ethnic minorities, that are disproportionately affected by health disparities and environmental hazards that impact quality of life.”

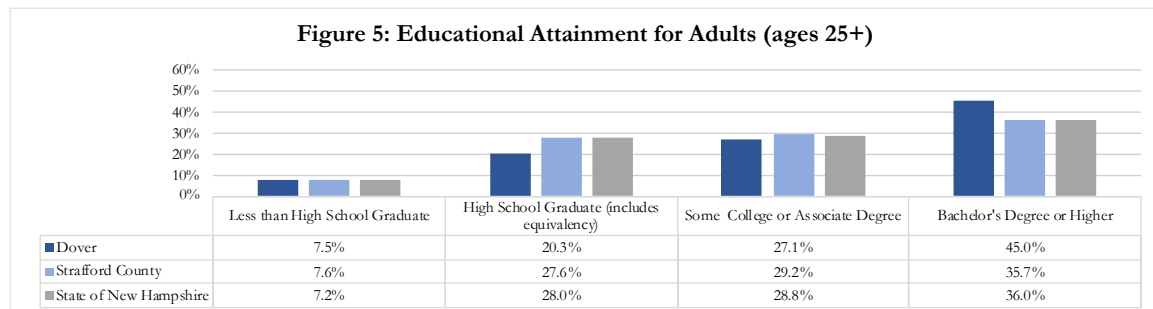
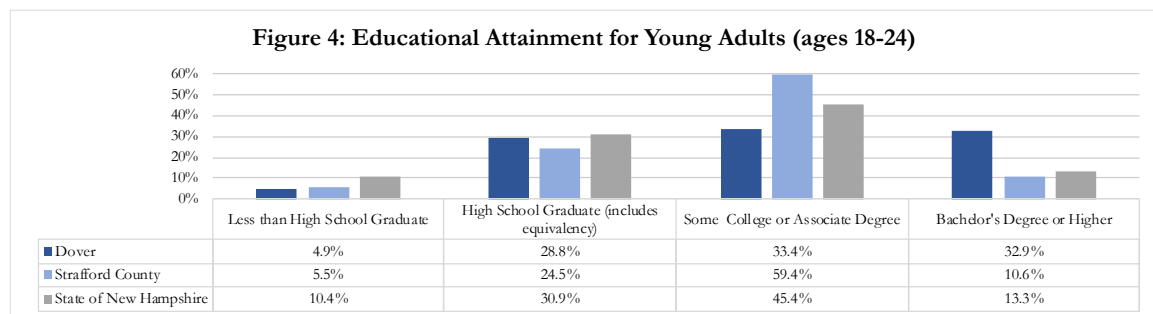
- National Recreation and Park Association

[Source: Racial and Ethnic Inclusion in Parks and Recreation]

The NH SCORP goes on to state that understanding the barriers or constraints to recreation participation, such as perception of safety, income/age/ethnicity diversity, and language barriers, is vital as New Hampshire’s demographics continue to shift.

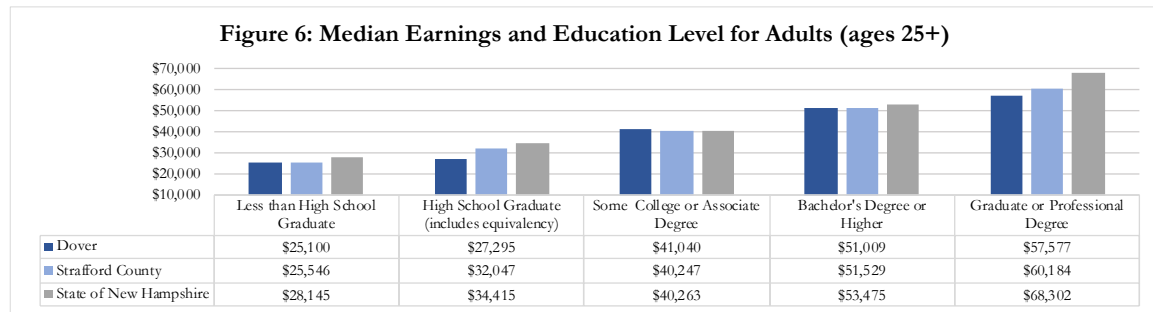
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

As seen in Figures 4 and 5, U.S. Census 2017 American Community Survey data documents that Dover’s residents have higher levels of education than Strafford County or the State of New Hampshire. Roughly 95 percent of young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 have at least a high school level degree, which is slightly higher than both the county (94.5 percent) and the state (89.6 percent). Most notably, the City has a much higher percentage of young adults with a bachelor’s degree or higher. Adults over the age of 25 follow similar trends. Roughly 92.5 percent of adults have at least a high school level degree, which is in line with both the county (92.4 percent) and the state (92.8 percent). Dover adults over 25 are also more likely to have a bachelor’s degree or higher.



U.S. Census data indicates that higher levels of education result in higher median earnings. As documented in Figure 6, median earnings for adults in Dover are comparable to those of the county and state (except for

some college or associate degree); however, those living in the City with a graduate or professional degree appear to earn significantly less than the median earnings for the state.

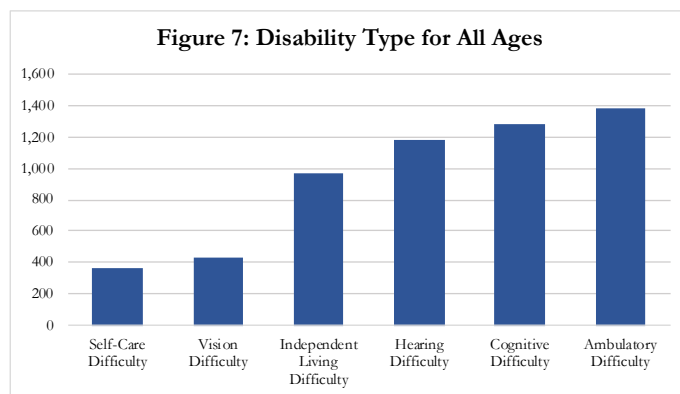


A 2015 study by the U.S. Forest Service found that people with higher education levels and higher incomes are more likely to participate in nature-based recreational activities than the general population. The reports also found that people with less than a high school education felt more constrained than people who completed high school from participating in their favorite recreation activities. This may be a result of several reasons, such as inadequate transportation and information, health, lack of money, feelings of being unwelcome or uncomfortable, language challenges, and physically limiting conditions or disabilities. The report concluded that, in general, people with low education and income levels usually have low participation rates and often encounter multiple barriers.²

DISABILITIES

According to data from the U.S. Census 2017 American Community Survey (see Figure 7) Dover has an estimated 3,362 individuals (11.2 percent) living with a disability. It should be noted that some individuals may identify as experiencing multiple disabilities. Roughly 77 percent of those with a disability are over the age of 65. Cognitive and ambulatory difficulties are the most prevalent disability types.

Many individuals living with physical and/or mental disabilities have limited opportunities to participate in recreation activities. For disabled children, boredom and social isolation is often experienced, while parents that provide full-round care, without assistance of a home health aide or other supportive services, may also feel frustration with the lack of resources, support, and accessibility. Additional choices, such as therapeutic and adaptive



Disability Types

Self-Care: Difficulty bathing or dressing.

Vision: Blind or having serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses.

Independent Living: Because of a physical, mental, or emotional problem, having difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping.

Hearing: Deaf or having serious difficulty hearing.

Cognitive: Because of a physical, mental, or emotional problem, having difficulty remembering, concentrating, or making decisions.

Ambulatory: Having serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs.

² Cordell, Ken H. "Outdoor Recreation Trends and Futures: A Technical Document Supporting the Forest Service 2010 RPA Assessment." CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015.

recreation, provide programming, clinics, and services designed to meet the needs of those with disabilities and to ensure access to opportunities equal to everyone else. Modified equipment allows those with disabilities to play their favorite sports including golf, biking, kayaking, archery, and swimming. The creation of safe environments for those with physical disabilities to participate in a variety of recreational activities promotes positive self-esteem, leadership skills, and independence.

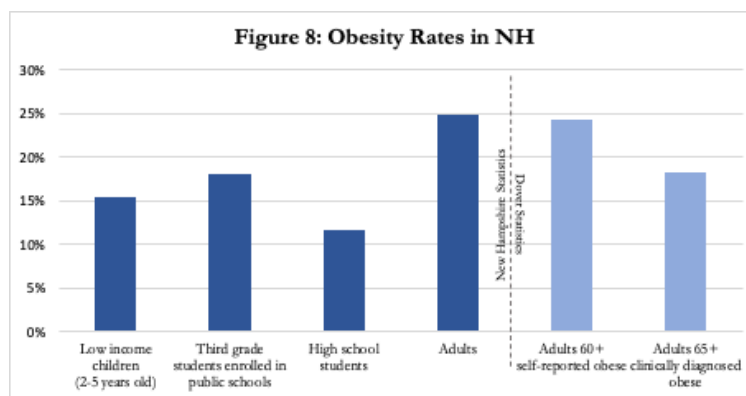
Health and Wellness

Recreational opportunities play an essential role in promoting individual health and wellness. The NH SCORP indicates that participation in outdoor recreation activities contributes to a healthy lifestyle by connecting people to parks, trails, facilities, and water resources. Recreation planning plays an important role in helping to reverse the alarming trend towards increased rates of obesity in both children and adults. According to the [New Hampshire Obesity Data Book](#) (2010), obesity increase the risk of developing chronic diseases, orthopedic problems, and depression. Further research suggests that the loss of contact with nature may result in additional health and wellness issues including a decline in physical, social, and mental well-being.³

“Children today spend less time outdoors than any other generation, devoting only four to seven minutes to unstructured outdoor play per day while spending an average of seven and a half hours in front of electronic media.”

- National Recreation and Park Association

[Source: Children in Nature: Improving Health by Reconnecting Youth with the Outdoors]



Information collected from the NH Obesity Data Book, illustrated in Figure 8, shows that highest obesity rates in the state can be found in low income children, 2-5 years old; third grade students enrolled in public schools; high school students; and adults. Dover statistics were similar with 24.4 percent of residents over the age of 60 are self-reported as obese and 18.3 percent of individuals over 65 are clinically diagnosed obese.⁴ As

Dover plans future cultural and recreation opportunities, consideration should be given to ensuring access and opportunities for these higher risk populations.

Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that adults achieve at least 300 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity or 150 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity (or an equivalent). Recent standards developed by the US Department of Health and Human Services recommend that youth (children and adolescents) be active for at least 60 minutes a day. In order to support these goals, local policies such as pedestrian improvements (sidewalks, crosswalks,

³ McLean, Daniel D, and Amy R Hurd. “Kraus' Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society.” 10th ed. Burlington, MA: Jones and Bartlett Learning, 2015.

⁴ John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. “2019 New Hampshire Healthy Aging Data Report.” Tufts Health Plan Foundation, 2019.

bike lanes, signage, lighting), enhancement of safety and accessibility features in and near parks, and upgrades to existing walking/hiking trails will continue to be required and possibly expanded.

Technology Competency

The evolution of technology and advancements in the proficient use of hi-tech devices by younger generations have had an impact the way in which communities plan, manage, and promote recreational activities and programs. Social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok, allow millions of users to communicate and engage with one another with ease. Each generation is more educated, competent, and dependent on the myriad of electronic devices that provide mobile accessibility.



Technological innovations have influenced how people use their free time and engage in leisure activities,⁵ pushing both the private and public sectors to develop creative ways to engage communities and encourage residents to get involved in local parks, trails, and other natural and cultural resources. Online platforms such as Meetup, Eventbrite, OpenSports, and Citysocializer have become popular resources to bring people together with similar recreational, cultural, and social interests. Geocaching, a real-world outdoor treasure-hunting activity that uses GPS-enabled devices, is an early example of a technology-supported hobby. More recent digital outdoor recreation activities include Strava races, Pokemon Go, and a proliferation of people engaging in outdoor activities to post on social media.

Several implications of technology that park and recreation professionals need to consider are identified in [Kraus' Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society: Future Perspectives of Recreation and Leisure](#), and are as follows:

- Young adults are less engaged in traditional recreation activities and more interested in technology-based behaviors such as posting on social media and connecting online.
- Society is far more connected than in any other time in history, which has eliminated the sense of “free time” and created unprecedented competition for an individual’s attention.
- Traditional communication techniques, such as advertising through local television or sending flyers and programs in the mail, have become obsolete and will not reach most of the public.
- A single person can influence thousands and even hundreds of thousands of people from behind their computer or smartphone.

Technology is going to continue to evolve at an exponential rate. Culture and Recreation professionals will need to better understand how different demographics access information to make it easier for everyone to take advantage of existing services and programming. New generations will continue to expand their technological knowledge as well as become more and more reliant on it. To address that trend, communities will need to create different ways to introduce them to the outdoors, fitness, and sports.

Funding

Each year communities are faced with tough budgetary decisions. Increased costs for salaries, wages, health insurance, and retirement costs, compounded with those of capital equipment and materials can force local governments to implement programmatic budget cuts. Unfortunately, cultural recreation and programming is not always a top priority, and too often is one of the first on the chopping block.

⁵ McLean and Hurd. “Kraus' Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society.”

The NH SCORP references a survey targeted at recreation stakeholders, which included municipal administrators, elected officials, conservation commissions, and recreation departments, that found that a majority (66%) of municipal funding for recreation has stayed the same over the past five years. Only twenty seven percent of stakeholders identified an increase in municipal funding for recreation, while seven percent reported a decrease in funding.

In Dover, “culture and recreation” is a core service and deemed necessary to include in the City’s budget. In fact, the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) analysis, which can be found in a following section, indicated that, over the past six years, Culture and Recreation funding for CIP projects has risen 53 percent. This is despite a decrease by 21 percent for all CIP projects, further demonstrating the City’s long-term investment in recreation improvements. Additionally, the City uses funding mechanisms, such as bonding and impacts fees, to help support the acquisition of land for recreational purposes, as well as pay for the infrastructure improvements.

BONDING

In 2004 and 2005, following a pattern of land conservation initiatives seen throughout the state, the City passed bond bills totaling \$2 million specifically for conservation related purchases. These funds were crucial to the land protection that occurred on the Measured Progress, Tuttle’s Farm, Hunt and Frazer tracts from 2005 to 2008. The Guppy ballfields rehabilitation, begun in 2019, also relied upon debt financing.

IMPACT FEES

Impact fees are designed to help offset the cost of growth and are dedicated to paying for the proportional share of impacts to capital facilities. All new residential development is charged a recreation impact fee, as well as, those for police, fire, and schools on a per unit basis. Recreation impact fees collected since Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 have totaled-up to \$871,846. Dover has in turn invested in park maintenance, the Waterfront Park, Community Trail, skate park, Garrison Tower, the indoor pool solarium, as well as, improvements to Henry Law, Amada Howard, and Park Street Parks. Impact fees represent an important funding mechanism for maintaining and improving the City’s recreational assets.

Dover has a limited supply of land suitable for development which is a challenge that will likely be exacerbated as population grows and development pressures rise. It will be important for recreation professionals to understand the effect of existing land constraints to identify and prioritize areas that possess significant natural features and recreational opportunities. Funding for capital improvements will remain a critical need to ensure the long-term operations and maintenance of existing infrastructure and future amenities or programming.



CAPITAL RESERVE

The majority of Dover’s capital infrastructure spending for recreation is financed through the capital reserve. The City has two recreation based reserves, the Parks Improvement and the Arena Fund. These savings accounts were developed to allow the City to save long term for improvements. The Parks Improvement fund was initially funded through the sale of gravel from the City’s Mast Road gravel pit. In 2017, the City transitioned to fund this through a transfer from the general fund, as part of the operating budget. \$112,500 has been placed in this fund annually for over 20 years. Money builds up in the account until sufficient funds are in place to meet planned project costs. Often projects will use a combination of impact fees and capital reserves. Additional information on the application of the capital reserve fund is outlined in the Capital Improvement Plans analysis later in this section.

GENERAL FUND

The general fund predominantly relies upon local property taxes and other city revenues to annually fund City programs and staffing. Expenses to support local culture and recreation are included within the Recreation Department and Community Service's Public Works budgets. The Recreation Department was budgeted \$2.36 million in FY2020 and the draft 2021 budget increases to \$2.66 million for recreation administration, programs, the indoor pool, the Thompson pool, and arena. Of those funds, the proposed 2021 budget allocates 27 percent to administration, 6 percent to programs (double the adopted 2020 budget), 21 percent to the indoor pool, 5 percent to the Thompson Pool and 41 percent to the arena. Funding within the Recreation Department includes costs for both culture and traditional recreation programs and events. The draft 2021 budget includes \$10,000 for the Cocheco Arts Festival, \$5,000 for Arts Commission projects, \$12,000 for July 4th Special Events, and \$75,000 for Dover's 400th Celebration.

Ongoing maintenance is supplemented to a limited extent by the City's Public Works Department's operating budget facilities and grounds maintenance funds that are used for not only recreation facilities, but schools, and other city-wide properties. These costs utilize a limited portion of the facilities and ground's proposed FY2021 \$1.5 million line item. City department requests for FY2021 include \$2,250 for new trees, \$10,500 for bark mulch, \$1,00 for community trail striping and signage, \$4,000 for landscaping materials and supplies, \$10,000 for maintenance of parks and playgrounds (including new benches downtown), and \$3,000 of park maintenance supplies and equipment.

Tourism

Tourism, as an industry, generates roughly \$887 billion in consumer spending nationwide.⁶ In New Hampshire, it is the second leading industry and is an important economic engine for the state's economy. According to 2017 data from the NH Division of Travel and Tourism Development, travel and tourism supported 48,000 jobs, generated \$5.5 billion in visitor spending, and accounted for \$269 million in tax revenues. New Hampshire has invested a substantial amount of time and money promoting the state as a tourist and recreational destination. These outdoor activities include camping, fishing, hunting, hiking, and boating. These efforts have been concentrated in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York City. Canadian tourists, especially those from Montreal and Toronto, also make up a sizable number of New Hampshire's visitors.

Dover is uniquely positioned near New Hampshire's three tourism hotspots - the Seacoast, Lakes Region, and White Mountains - and is close to larger regional hubs including Portland, ME and Boston, MA making it an ideal location to capitalize on current and potential visitors. Data provided by the Greater Dover Chamber of Commerce shows that the Seacoast Region has experienced roughly a 16 percent increase in arts, entertainment, and recreation visitor spending since 2011, generating roughly \$65.9 million dollars in 2018.



As New Hampshire investigates ways to differentiate itself from neighboring states, additional marketing and branding campaigns will continue to promote the state's natural beauty and outdoor-oriented experience. This is done with the goal to attract and sustain employers, workers, and families to the Granite State.

The Creative Economy

Promotion of the arts provides cultural recreation opportunities and supports our local economy. According to the Americans for the Arts' "[2017 NH Creative Industries Report](#)," these sectors constitute four percent of all New Hampshire businesses and approximately two percent of all employees. The "[New Hampshire](#)

⁶ "New Hampshire Outdoor Recreation Report." Outdoor Industry Association, 2017.

[Arts in Health Care Survey Report](#),” by the Arts Education Partnership, documents the role literary, performing and visual arts play in improving healthcare services and the well-being of patients and professionals.

Dover’s Arts Commission works to promote the arts, advocates for artists, highlight local talent, and engage the Dover community through a series of ongoing programs. The Commission collaborates with the Police Department to coordinate a busking program to promote performance arts in the downtown and parks. Artists may apply to install a public art project at the McConnell Center Cafeteria, Dover Library, Henry Law Park and at City Hall. They also offer grants up to \$1,500 for art projects, programs, performances, and activities designed to enrich quality of life in the City. Additionally, the Commission advises the City Council through a defined public art acquisition process. The Arts Commission has researched on ways to enhance arts in the communities and have helped draft the arts recommendations found later in this chapter.

Existing Plans and Resources

To gain a better understanding of the City’s current recreational resources, SRPC completed an in-depth review of a series of local and regional plans and resources. City resources included:

- Recreation Master Plan Chapter (2009)
- Vision Master Plan Chapter (2012)
- Capital Improvements Programs (2016-2021 through 2021-2026)
- Arts Commission Goals

Regional plans and resources included survey results from the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (2020) and geospatial information from a regional recreation database that was created as part of the Pathways to Play project (2020) and expanded by local volunteers and SRPC staff. A comprehensive inventory of recreation sites and areas was analyzed using GIS-based maps of recreation locations, transportation infrastructure, and demographic characteristics. This analysis was supplemented by individual site assessments completed for each park.

Recreation Master Plan Chapter (2009)

City staff, in conjunction with SRPC, reviewed the existing 63 recommended actions that were developed as part of the previous master plan chapter. This gave everyone a better understanding of what had been accomplished and which actions needed to be modified and then carried forward. The first step was to identify existing policies, procedures, and best practices that were still relevant. These would be used in the updated plan as guidelines and principles that should be implemented city-wide. The second step was to analyze site specific actions that pertained to each park, athletic field, and facility to identify areas in need of improvement. Actions that were not completed had a written explanation of the challenges, barriers, priorities and strategies required for successful implementation. The results of this analysis were presented to the Steering Committee for feedback and were used to inform the development of the revised implementation matrix.

Vision Master Plan Chapter (2012)

Dover made the most recent visioning effort a separate and stand-alone process for their new master plan. This approach fostered more community involvement and offered residents a greater opportunity to provide feedback on what they envision for the future.

The Dover 2023 Vision is made up of three main components: the Vision Statement, Themes, and Elements. The Vision Statement contains eight characteristics describing what the community wants to realize by 2023. The eight Vision Themes and forty-nine Vision Elements explain in detail how the vision can be accomplished.



A “great recreation system” is a core characteristic of the City’s Vision Statement. Supportive traits include cultural opportunities, a strong sense of community, well-maintained infrastructure, accessibility for walking and bicycling, high quality of life, and enhanced environmental quality. All play a vital role in the sustained health of the City’s recreation structure.

One of the eight Vision Themes is dedicated to Open Space and Recreation, stating that open space and recreation facilities and programs serve the fitness and social interaction needs of the entire community, are well distributed, maintained, and accessible to everyone. Vision Elements include:

- Open space and recreation facilities and programs that are well located, well-maintained, pet friendly and serve the needs of the entire community.
- A network of walking/bike trails that expands on the existing Community Trail and connects neighborhoods, downtown parks, and open spaces.
- Access to Dover’s waterways is provided across the city for recreation, trailer and carry-in boat access. Boat, kayak, and bike rentals are readily available.
- Preserve natural resources: water, watershed, air, farmland (aquifer conservation and filtration), and a working waterfront.

Components of the Vision Statement, Themes, and Elements set forth in the Dover 2023 Vision Chapter, as well as data collected during the civic engagement activities and questionnaire were used by the Master Plan Steering Committee throughout the master plan process to provide overall guidance and to ensure consistency with the City’s long-term goals.

Capital Improvements Programs (2016-2021 through 2021-2026)

The Capital Improvements Program (CIP) is a planning effort that takes place at the beginning of each budget cycle for the following fiscal year and includes the projects essential to meeting the immediate and long-term needs of our citizens and business community.

Dover has, on an ongoing basis, planned for recreation projects within its annual updates of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Over the course of the most recent six CIPs (FY2016-2021 through FY2021-2026) the City increasingly allocated funds to Culture and Recreation projects administered by the recreation department. Culture and Recreation funding levels rose from a dedicated \$1,617,500, representing one-percent of all projects programmed in the FY2016-2021 CIP, to \$2,475,000, two-percent of all projects programmed in the FY2021-2026 CIP. This represents a 53 percent increase in funding for Culture and Recreation projects. Over the same period, funding for all CIP projects decreased by 21 percent, emphasizing the significance of the City’s increased investment in recreation improvements.

Annually the City transfers \$112,500 from the operating budget to a capital reserve fund dedicated to park and playground improvements. Additionally, in 2018 the city transitioned from programming

\$100,000 every other year for park infrastructure replacement and maintenance to an annual dedication of \$75,000, increasing its overall investment in ongoing improvements. Other Cultural and Recreation projects included in the CIPs included:

- Transfer to Capital Reserve - Park/Playground Improvement
- Park Infrastructure Replace/Maintenance
- Park Improvements - Amanda Howard
- Park Improvements - Garrison Hill Park
- Henry Law Riverwalk Improvements (included in earlier years, later removed)
- Indoor Pool Heating System Repairs
- Indoor Pool Solarium
- Indoor Pool Lighting (included in earlier years, later removed)
- Jenny Thompson Pool Water Heating System
- Jenny Thompson Renovations
- Arena-Zamboni Replacement
- Arena-Foster Rink Air Conditioning
- Arena-Sprinkler System
- Bus Replacement

Other recreation related projects have been included in other sections of the FY2016-2021 through FY2021-2026 CIPs. Projects, totaling \$1,940,000, have included SAU Athletic Improvements, Community Services Department Community Trail Improvements, and TIF District funding for the Cochecho Riverfront Park Development and Park Improvements at Maglaras Park.

Recreation projects in the CIP have typically been funded with reserve funds and a limited amount through the operating budget. Impact fees offset \$707,500 of programmed funds for Cultural and Recreation projects as well as the other recreation related projects in the eleven years of CIP programming years reviewed.



The annual \$75,000 programmed for park infrastructure replacement and maintenance is fully utilized each year by the recreation department. Ongoing maintenance is supplemented to a limited extent by the City's Public Works Department's operating budget facilities and grounds maintenance funds that are used for not only recreation facilities, but schools, and other city-wide properties. For example, landscaping materials (\$4,000 requested for FY2021) will be predominantly dedicated to Dover Pride Day and Adopt-a-Spots. Bark mulch (\$10,500 requested for FY2021) will be used for all school playgrounds and city parks. Funding for signs and posts are for all signs across the city including stop signs and pedestrian crossings. This creates competing demands for existing funds – capital improvements (equipment repairs, replacements, new installations) versus regular maintenance (pruning, landscaping, painting).

Across all years analyzed, there are no planned cultural events or arts projects listed within the CIPs. All Cultural and Recreation funds are dedicated to recreation projects. Any capital cultural or arts projects identified in implementation section of this Master Plan chapter will need new funding beyond that in the current CIP. They might consider the establishment of an additional line similar to the park infrastructure replacement and maintenance line for existing city arts installations and cultural events. Additionally, any new installations or cultural events will need additional funding and should be added to the capital improvement program as a separate project.



The analysis of CIP funding for individual projects will be integrated into the implementation section to identify those capital projects for which additional funding will be required.

Arts Commission Goals

In 2019, the Arts Commission developed five goals, each with associated actions, to guide arts and cultural activities in the City. The goals included: establishing a cultural plan, encouraging the installation of public art, diversifying funding opportunities, strengthening relationships, and increasing awareness. Each action was given a priority (high, medium, low), a responsibility, and status. Arts Commission members on the Master Plan Steering Committee helped advise and identify which actions to include in this chapter’s implementation matrix.

Survey Results from Metropolitan Transportation Plan (2020)

In the United States, every urbanized area of 50,000 people or more is designated by federal law as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO); Dover is a member of the Strafford MPO. Each MPO is required to develop and maintain a Metropolitan Transportation Plan, or Metro Plan for short, which is a comprehensive document that analyzes the regional transportation system and plans for its development over the next 20 years.

What changes would encourage you to walk, bicycle, or use public transportation more frequently?

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p><i>“I would cycle more for day to day if road conditions were better and dedicated bike lanes.”</i></p> | <p><i>“More bike trails, improved walking trails.”</i></p> | <p><i>“Bicycle lanes! Clean, clear, and well-lit sidewalks.”</i></p> |
| <p><i>“Protected bike lanes, sidewalks with curbs, and cheaper transportation fares.”</i></p> | <p><i>“Bike lanes!”</i></p> | <p>Responses from Dover Residents</p> |

[Source: Metro Plan Survey Results, April 2020]

As this master plan chapter was being developed, the Strafford MPO was in the process of updating its Metro Plan to accurately reflect the needs, values, and vision of the people who rely on the region’s transportation system. One of the many ways Strafford MPO got input from stakeholders was through an online survey with 31 specific questions designed to help identify important areas to ensure the system continues to improve and serve its citizens. Survey results were analyzed by SRPC staff, who were able to identify Dover residents based on participant zip codes, for links between transportation and recreation.

Of the 321 total survey responses, 84 were Dover residents – with nearly 55 percent of participants between the ages of 25-44. Several key themes related to culture and recreation emerged, including the expansion of bike lanes and improvements to pedestrian infrastructure (sidewalk maintenance, trail network growth, and beautification of public green spaces) that were used to help inform this master plan’s accessibility recommendations.

Pathways to Play

Stafford Regional Planning Commission conducted an assessment to examine recreation accessibility throughout the region and created a regional recreation GIS data layer in 2019, as part of a project aimed at reducing obesity in children and their families. This layer combined several existing spatial datasets, including conservation lands, key destination points, recreation sites and trails, waterbody public access locations, and other municipal-specific information.



Maps were created to display themes, such as site characteristics, geographical distribution, and recreation and transportation accessibility, and were used during this master plan update to identify gaps and opportunities for increased access to recreation sites in the City. A more detailed explanation of the inventory and results of the spatial analysis can be found in the subsequent part of this section.

Map Analysis

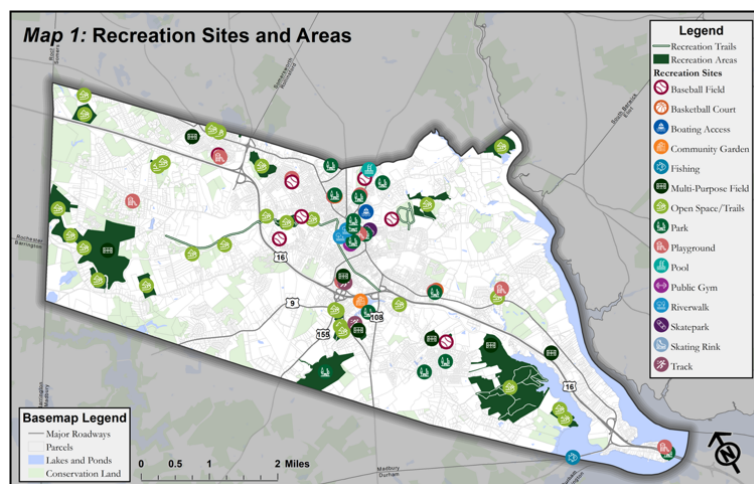
Inventory and Analysis of Recreation Sites and Recreation Areas

Using data from Pathways to Play, SRPC expanded its existing recreation lands data layer to create a comprehensive geospatial record for the City that includes existing and specific characteristics of parks such as access points, available facilities, open space, amenities, and conditions. Additional local knowledge, values, and perspectives from citizens and City staff were collected using specific evaluation criteria. This data is illustrated in a series of maps and is a resource intended to be used by a variety of users, including recreation seekers, businesses, planners, municipal officials, volunteer organizations and agencies, as a tool to make meaningful and informed decisions to sustain and improve the City’s recreation system. It is important to note that only maps which displayed statistically significant data were displayed in the body of the chapter; therefore, in some cases map numbers do not go in sequential order. All maps in larger scales (11x17) can be found in the Chapter’s Appendix A.

The following maps and associated analyses document the proximity of recreation sites to various infrastructure, transit, populations, and neighborhood communities.

Recreation Locations

Dover has 72 diverse recreation sites across the City, the most prevalent opportunity being open spaces and trails. Aggregated, recreation properties total up to approximately eight percent of the City’s land area (18,592 total acres of land in Dover, and 1,470 acres of recreation sites). Open space and trails, a subset of recreation sites, total 7.5 percent (1,420 acres) of the City’s land area. The individual recreation sites and areas data layers represent the same recreation locations; however, the recreation “sites” layer is a point file and the recreation “areas” layer is a polygon file. The difference



being, the recreation sites show smaller facilities (playgrounds and parks), whereas the recreation areas show the full extent of large recreation sites (open space). Map 1 combines these two data layers to create a broad inventory map that shows the full system of recreational opportunities in Dover.

A planning industry standard assumes the average person is willing to walk 10 minutes, which equals approximately a ½ mile walk for the average person, to use a recreation site. Most will likely use other forms of transportation to access recreation sites that are further than a 10-minute walk from their location. Map 2 uses a ½ mile radius distance and does not consider the distance walked using roadways or sidewalks.

Map 3 represents various walk times, by using multiple buffers of different radius distances.

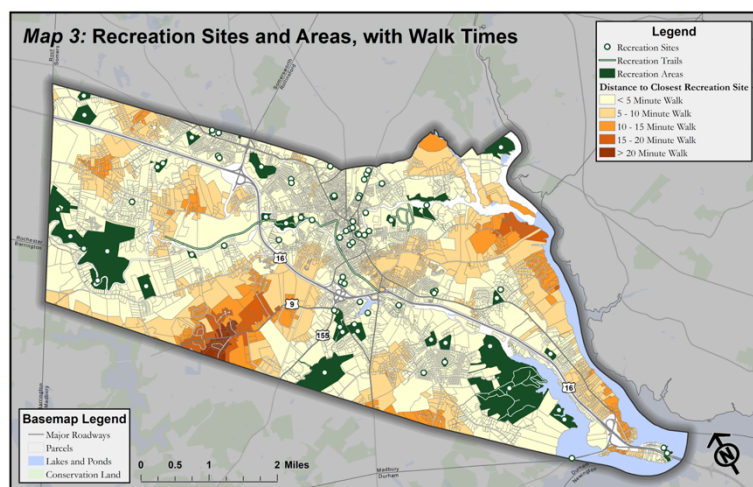
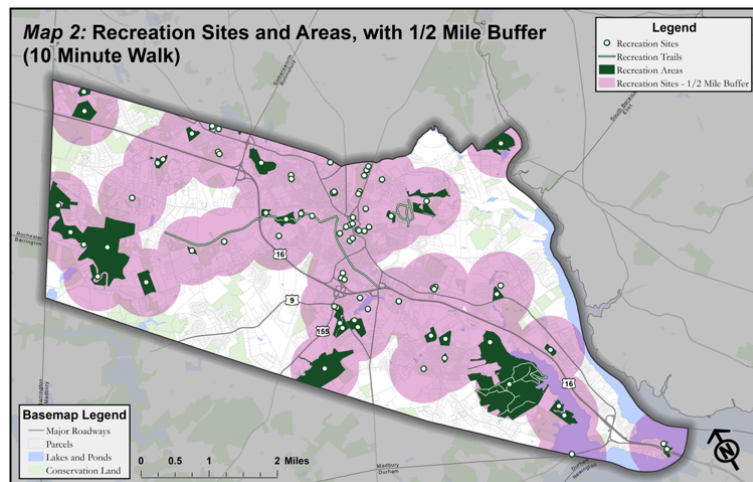
These buffers were overlaid onto a parcels layer to show every parcel in the City and the walk time to the closest recreation site. The lighter colors show shorter walking times, while the darker colors indicate longer walk times.

The City's many open spaces and trails, as well as the 10 playgrounds and 17 sports fields are widely spread across the city with increased concentrations in more densely populated neighborhoods. This results in 65 percent of all parcels proximate to a recreation site within a 5-minute walk, 24 percent within a 5-10-minute walk and 6 percent within 10-15 minutes. Only 3 percent of all parcels have greater than a 15-minute walk to find a place to recreate.

Transportation Infrastructure

A series of maps overlaying transportation data and recreation sites was created to show the accessibility relationship between public transportation and recreation.

Map 4 includes the ½ mile buffer around recreation sites to show the relationship recreational opportunities in the City that are accessible within a 10-minute walk and are accessible by existing sidewalks. Downtown Dover roads have sidewalks supporting walkability for the many city residents living in the densest part of

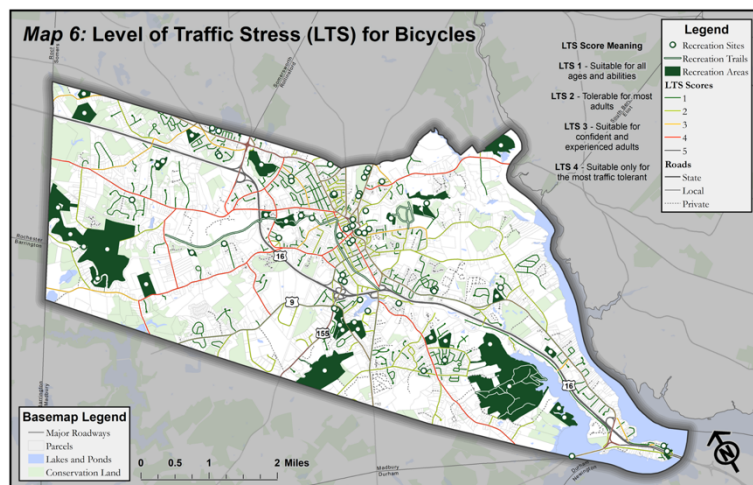
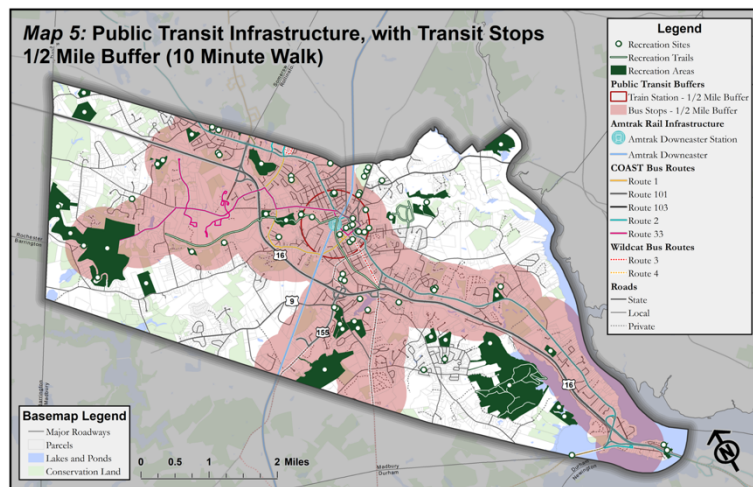
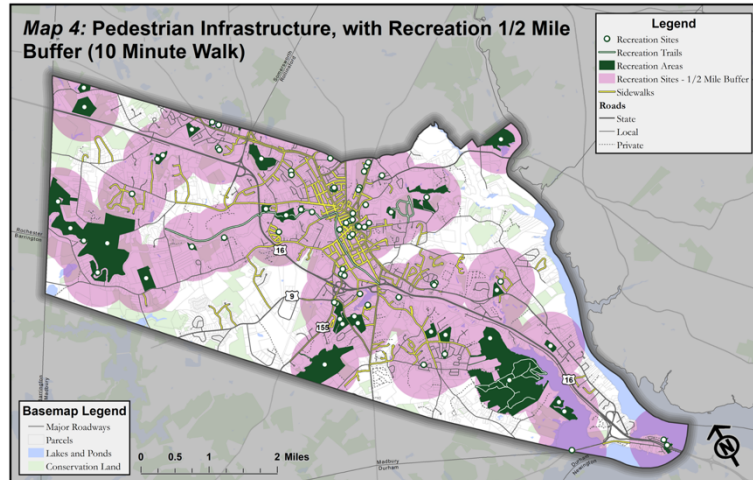


Dover within short walking proximity to numerous recreation sites. The City's 73 miles of sidewalks become less frequent outside of downtown.

Map 5 illustrates the COAST bus system (Routes 1, 101, 203, 2, and 33) and Wildcat bus system (Routes 3 and 4), as well as Amtrak passenger rail. This map includes a 1/2 mile buffer around those public bus routes and the passenger rail stop downtown to illustrate the connection between existing recreation sites in the City that are accessible within a 10-minute walk of public transit opportunities, and to identify where there are areas for improvement. (Note, the COAST bus routes will change somewhat on July 1, 2020.)

Dover's geographic dispersion of recreation opportunities coupled with available transportation infrastructure further increases overall access to sites for both city residents and visitors from neighboring communities. Dover is serviced by both the COAST Bus system (Routes 1, 101, 103, 2, and 33) and the Wildcat Bus system (Routes 3 and 4). COAST bus routes create public transit access connections with Newington, the Strafford County Complex, Rochester, Farmington, and between the Dover Transportation Center and Somersworth and Portsmouth, NH and Kittery and Berwick, ME. Wildcat

Transit further expands accessibility with connections between Dover, Newington and Durham, NH (UNH). The public transit systems have public bus stops within a 10-minute walk of 72 percent of properties in Dover and 54 recreation sites are within a 10-minute walk of a bus stop. Additionally, there are 13 recreation sites within a 10-minute walk from the Amtrak Downeaster train stop.



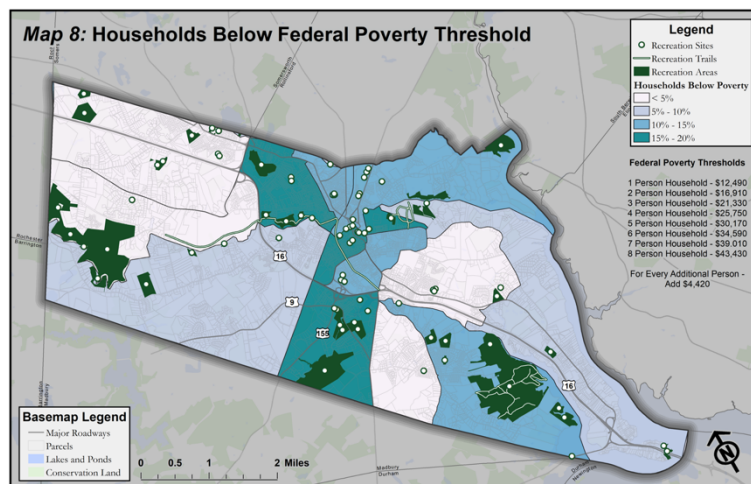
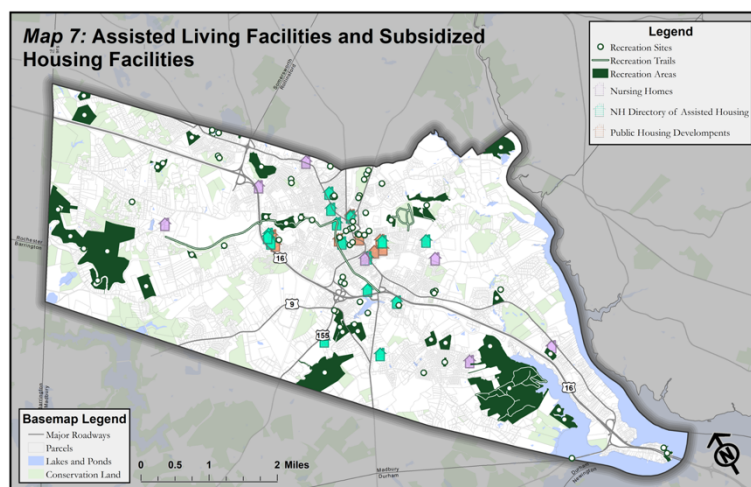
Map 6: Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) uses data developed by SRPC during a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) project. Bicycling itself represents a form of recreation and along with walkability is an important way residents access recreation sites. The map illustrates the connection between existing recreational opportunities and easy and safe bike routes by showing the proximity of recreation sites to roadways with the lowest level of traffic stress.

One factor included within an analysis of the Bicycle Level Traffic of Stress (LTS) is traffic volume, where in Dover, the majority of the roads in Dover have a low traffic volume, an annual average daily traffic (AADT) of less than 1,000 vehicles. The only roadway with a high AADT value (greater than 40,000) is Route 16. These volumes contribute to the many miles of roads in Dover with lower levels of stress of bicyclists. There are 63 miles of roadway with an LTS 1 or low stress suitable for all ages and another 43 miles of LTS 2, low stress with attention required and tolerable for most adults. At the other end of the spectrum there are only 20 miles of LTS 3 roadways (moderate stress and suitable for confident and experienced adults) and 25 miles of LTS 4, the most stressful roadways suitable only for the most traffic tolerant. There are another 28 miles of roadway that prohibit bicycling.

Demographic Characteristics

A series of maps overlaying demographics data and recreation sites were created to show the proximity of recreation sites to various populations. Demographics were mapped by block group, and included assisted living facilities and subsidized housing facilities, households below the poverty level, minorities, population density, and age distribution.

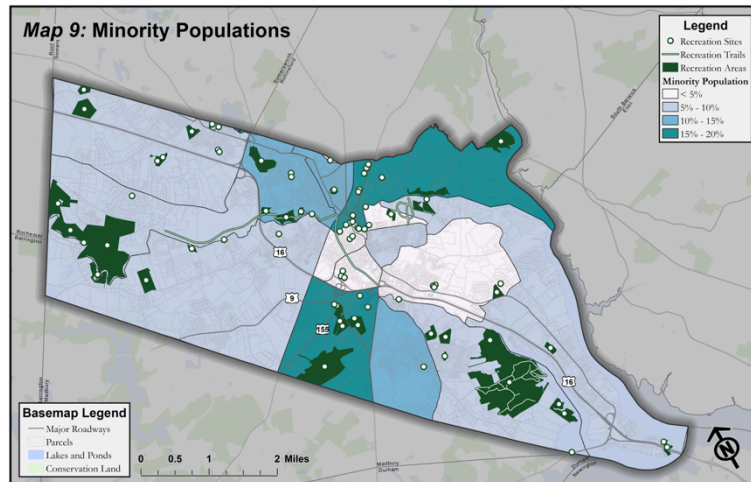
Map 7 shows existing nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and subsidized housing developments overlaid with Dover's recreation sites to depict the relationship between these types of facilities and their access to recreation throughout the City. Related to Map 8: Household Poverty Levels and Map 10: Population Density (below), downtown is home most assisted and subsidized housing and public housing developments as well as a greater number of recreations sites.



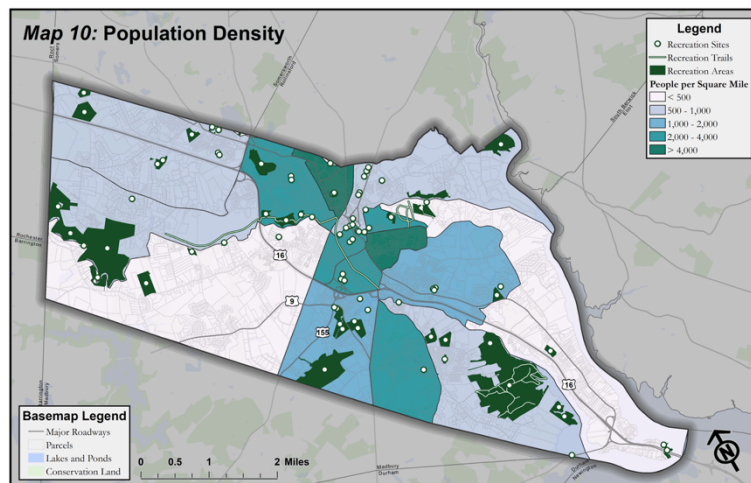
Map 8 demonstrates the relationship between those areas with lower incomes and access to recreation. Downtown, where population density is greatest and which is proximate to a greater number of

recreation sites, is also home to a larger share of households in poverty compared to non-downtown areas.

Map 9: Minority Populations identified areas in the City that may be experiencing equity issues. More specifically, this analysis was intended to determine if there was a direct correlation between areas with higher concentrations of minority populations and a disproportionate lack of access to recreational opportunities. Minority populations represent a larger share of the population in two neighborhoods, one in the eastern side of the City, and one in the western side of the City.



Map 10: Population Density was created to determine if residents living in the more densely populated areas in Dover had the same opportunity to access outdoor recreation as those living in the more rural areas of the City. Density calculations were based on people per square mile.

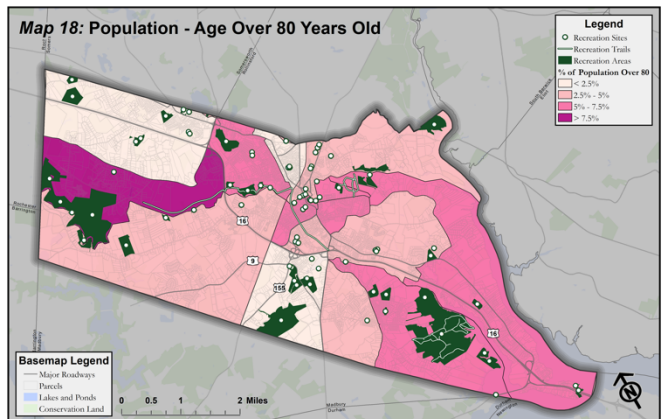
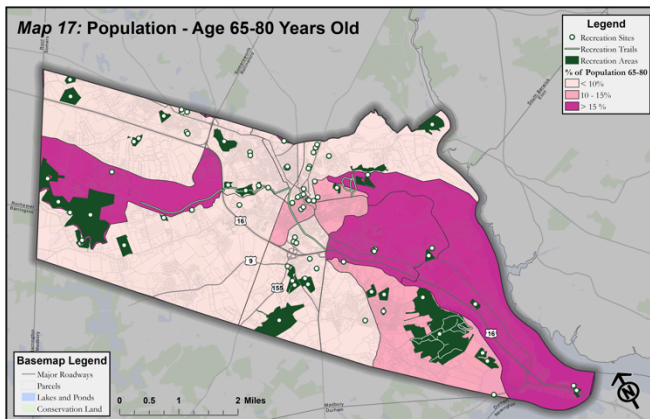
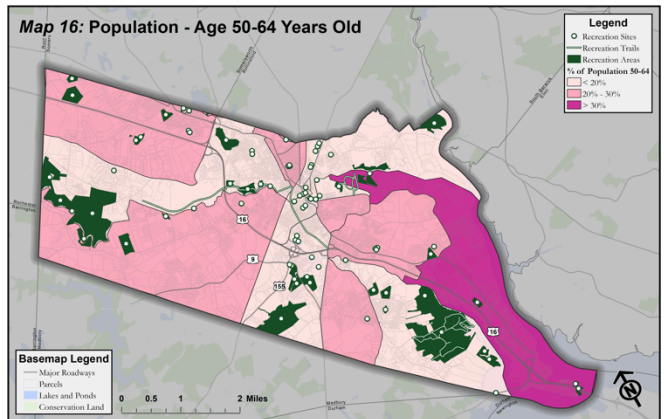
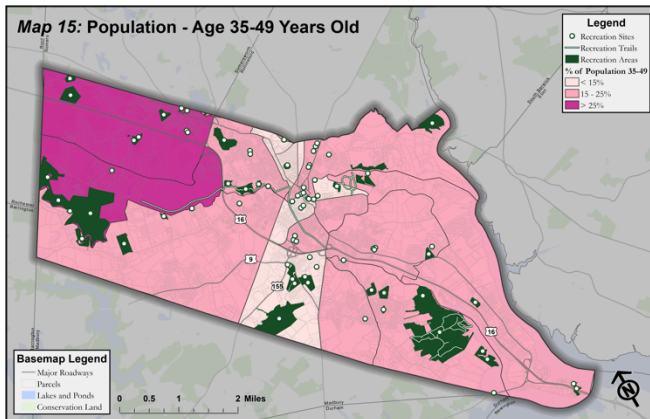
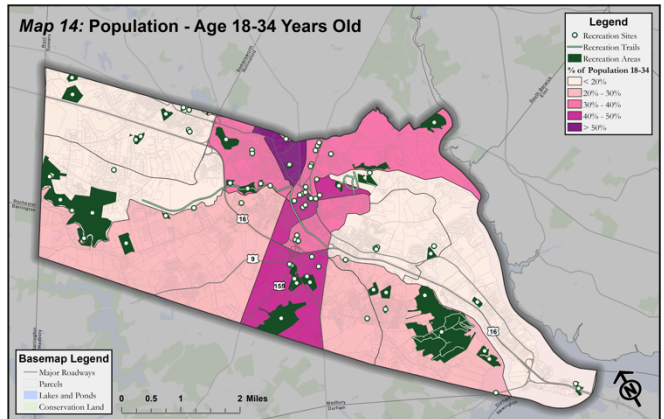
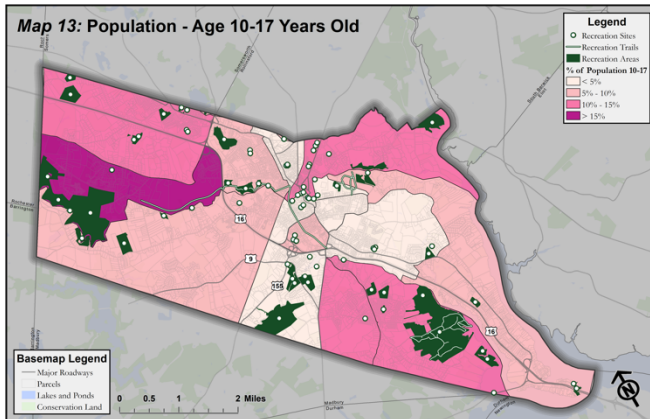
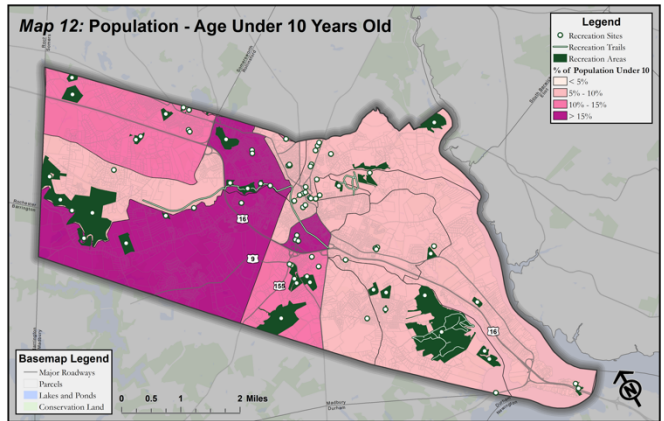
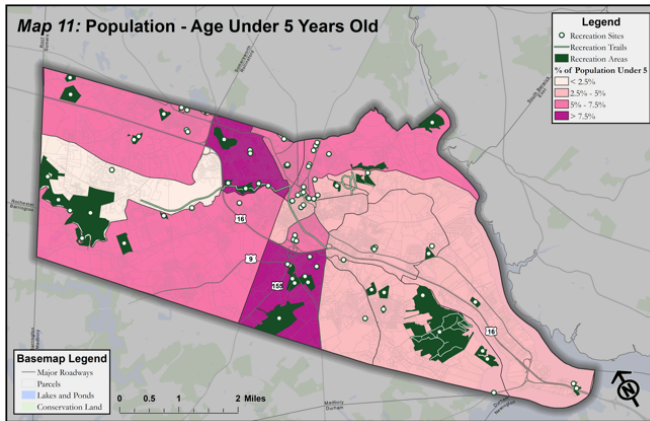


“Inherent in the concept of local public parks is the idea that all members of a community — regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, ability level, or socioeconomic status — have access to a safe place to gather, play, exercise, and enjoy being outdoors.”

- American Planning Association

[Source: Prioritizing Urban and Community Parks Can Boost Health and Social Equity]

Maps 11 to 18 display age cohort distributions, using data obtained by the U.S. Census Bureau, overlaid with recreation sites to determine if there was a significant disparity between recreation accessibility among certain age cohorts throughout the City. Analysis of age cohorts also aids in planning future improvements suitable to the interests and needs of the neighborhood. Generally, there are larger concentrations of families with children toward the northern half of the City. There are very few teenagers that live in the downtown and central areas of the City. Downtown and downtown adjacent neighborhoods have larger shares of young adult populations. And older adults comprise a larger share of populations south of downtown.

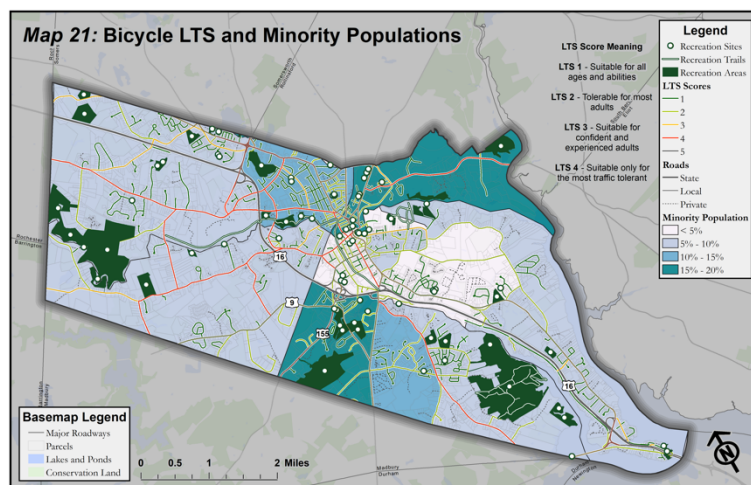
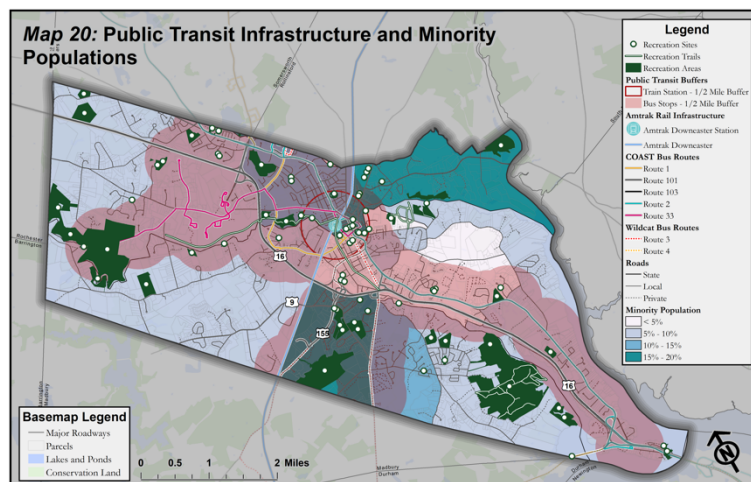
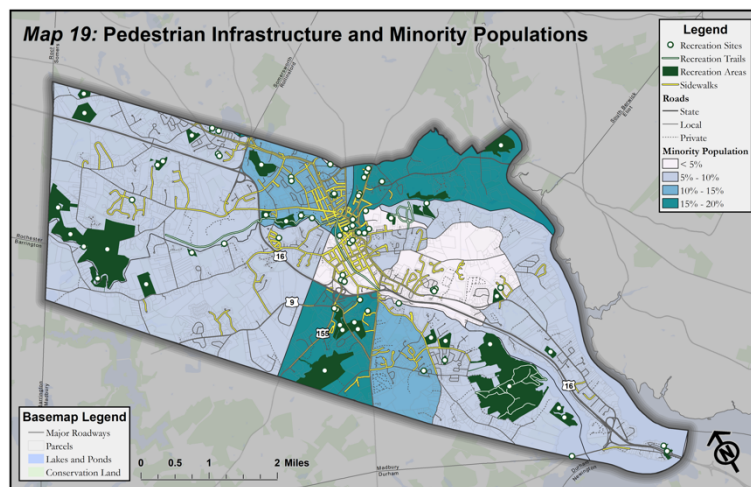


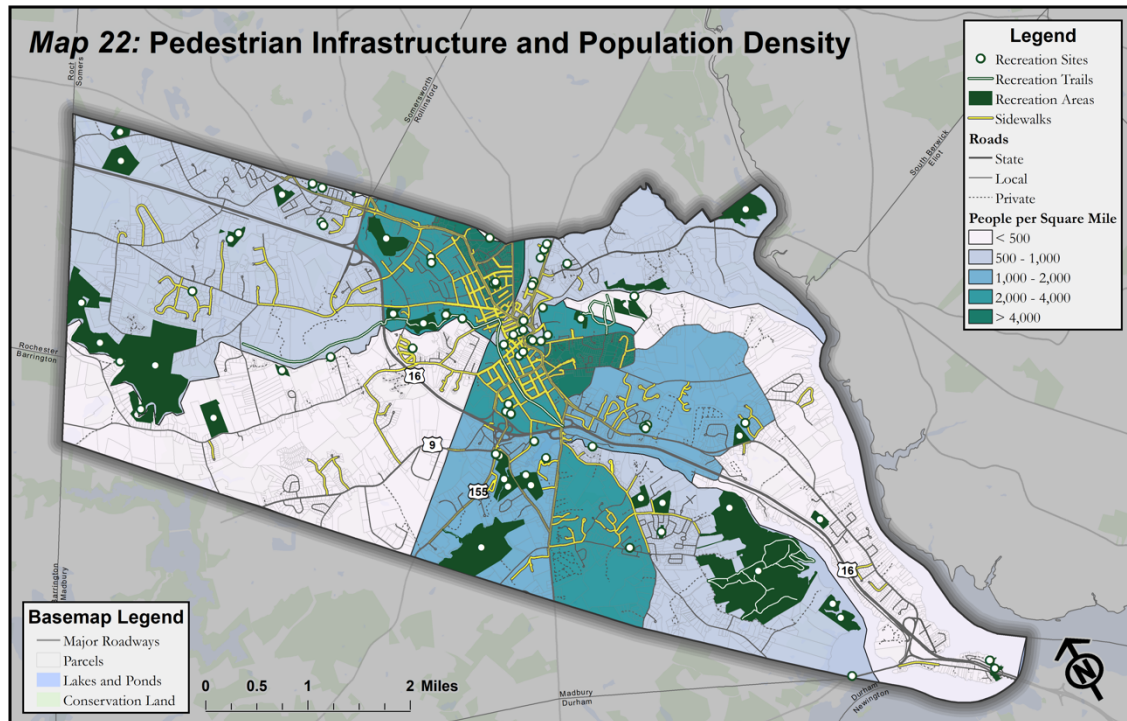
Transportation and Demographic Characteristics Combined

Several datasets used in the transportation and demographic characteristic maps were combined to create composite maps in order to demonstrate the relationship between existing transportation infrastructure such as public transit, sidewalks, and bike routes with demographic information including minority populations, density, age, and income. This will allow City staff to identify if there are areas of the City with underserved populations that do not have equal access to recreational opportunities and to plan accordingly.

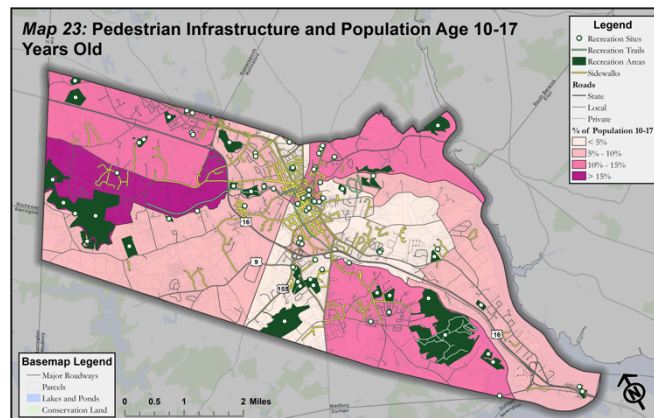
Maps 19 to 21 analyze the relationship between minority populations and their ability to use existing sidewalks, public transit, and areas with low levels of traffic stress for biking to access recreation sites.

Map 22 correlate population density and the relationship between those living in the most densely populated neighborhoods with more rural areas and their opportunities to use existing sidewalks to access recreation sites throughout the City.

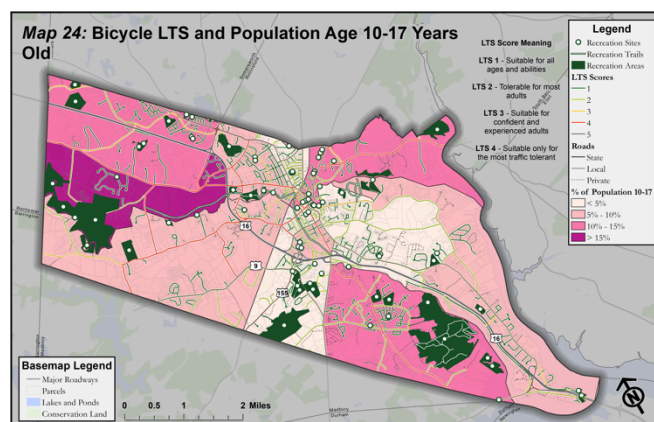




Maps 23 to 25 show several age cohorts and the correlation between different age groups and their ability to use existing sidewalks and bike routes with low traffic stress to access recreation sites. A teenage population (ages 10-17) and an older population (ages 65-80) were chosen as these two age groups may not always have access to a vehicle and may be more prone to use other modes of transportation, such as walking or biking.



Maps 26 and 27 analyze the relationship between those areas in the City with lower median household incomes and their ability to use existing sidewalks and public transit (COAST, Wildcat, and Amtrak) to access recreation sites.



There are several takeaways important for assessing the availability and accessibility of recreation opportunities across populations and neighborhoods. One of the neighborhoods with a high percentage of minority population does not have a route into or out of the neighborhood that is easily bikeable.

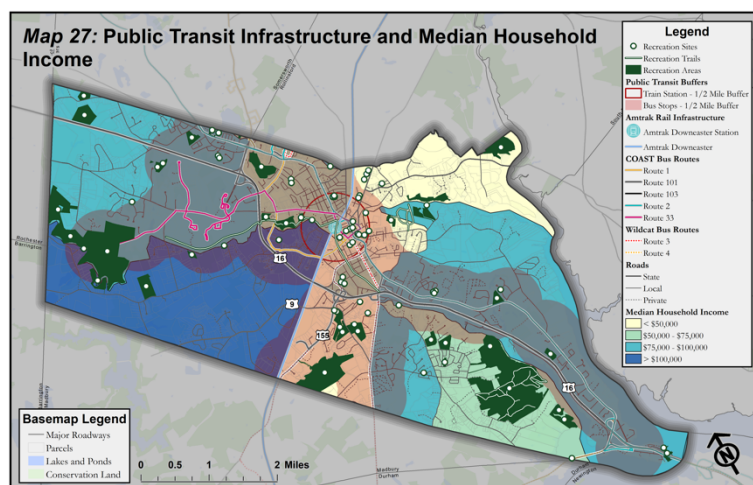
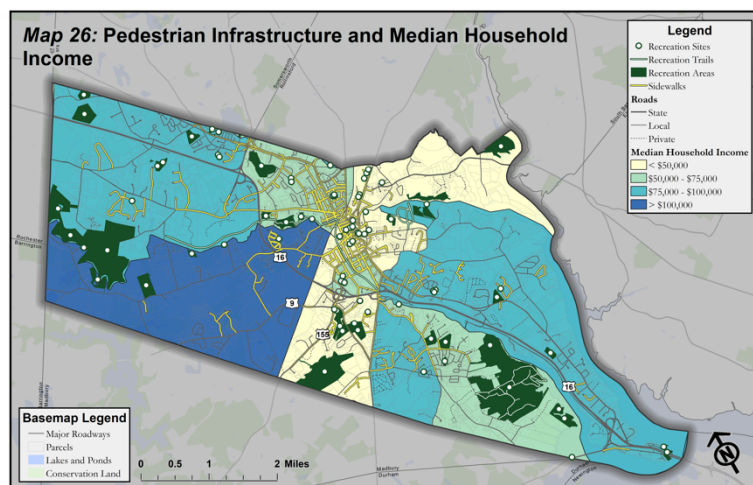
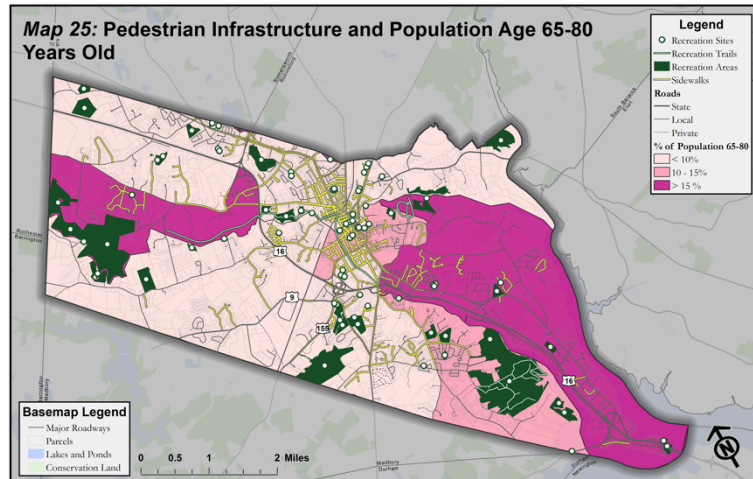
Similarly, neighborhoods with high percentages of teenagers do not have easily bikeable roadways or sidewalks. Similar access gaps exist for some populations' and neighborhoods' proximity to public transit. Neighborhoods with high minority population percentages are not serviced by public bus systems, nor is one of neighborhoods with the lowest median household income. There are limited sidewalks in neighborhoods with high percentages of people aged 50-65 and 65-80 years old, minority populations, and lowest median household incomes.

Age Suitability

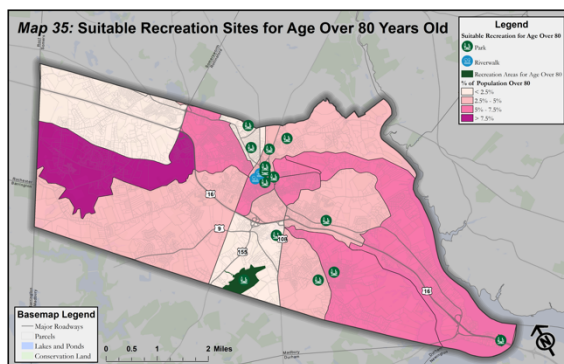
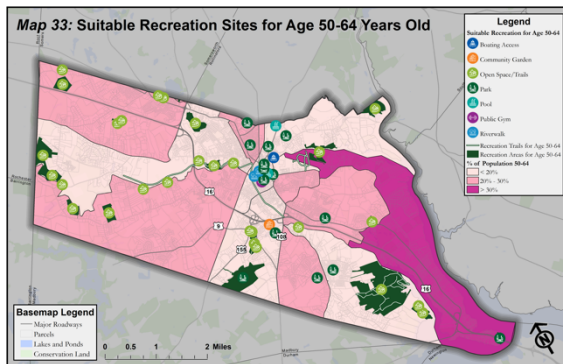
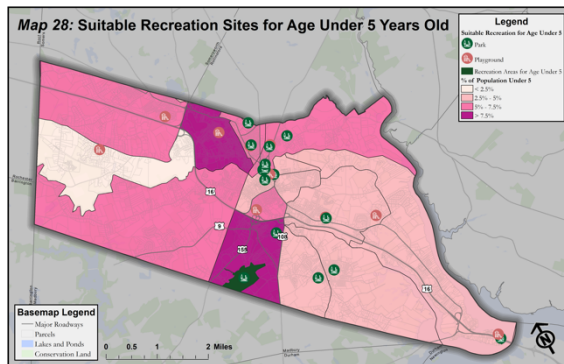
A map set was created overlaying the recreation sites suitable for a certain age groups on top of the block group demographics data for that age group. For example, a playground is not a suitable recreation site for someone over 80 and a skatepark is not a suitable recreation site for someone in the under-five age group. A detailed summary of which recreation sites are suitable for which age groups is included in Table 1.

Maps 28: Suitable Recreation Sites for Under Age 5, Map 33: Suitable Sites for Ages 50-64 and Map 35: for Over Age 80 were chosen for inclusion in this section of the Master Plan given their statistically significant results. There are

few recreation facilities available that are suitable for children under age 5 or seniors. At the neighborhood level, those with the highest percentages of children under age 5 have no suitable recreation opportunities for their young children. Neighborhoods with the highest percentage of people aged 50-64 or over age 80 years old have very few suitable recreation opportunities. The other maps can be found in the Appendix.



| Table 1: Suitable Recreation Site by Age | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| | Age Under 5 | Age Under 10 | Age 10-17 | Age 18-34 | Age 35-49 | Age 50-64 | Age 65-80 | Age Over 80 |
| Baseball Field | | | X | X | X | | | |
| Basketball Court | | | X | X | X | | | |
| Boating Access | | | | X | X | X | | |
| Community Garden | | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Multi-Purpose Field | | | X | X | X | | | |
| Open Space / Trails | | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Park | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Playground | X | X | X | | | | | |
| Pool | | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Public Gym | | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Riverwalk | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| School - Baseball Field | | | X | X | X | | | |
| School - Multi-Purpose Field | | | X | X | X | | | |
| School - Playground | X | X | X | | | | | |
| School - Track | | | X | X | X | | | |
| Skatepark | | | X | X | | | | |
| Skating Rink | | | X | X | X | | | |



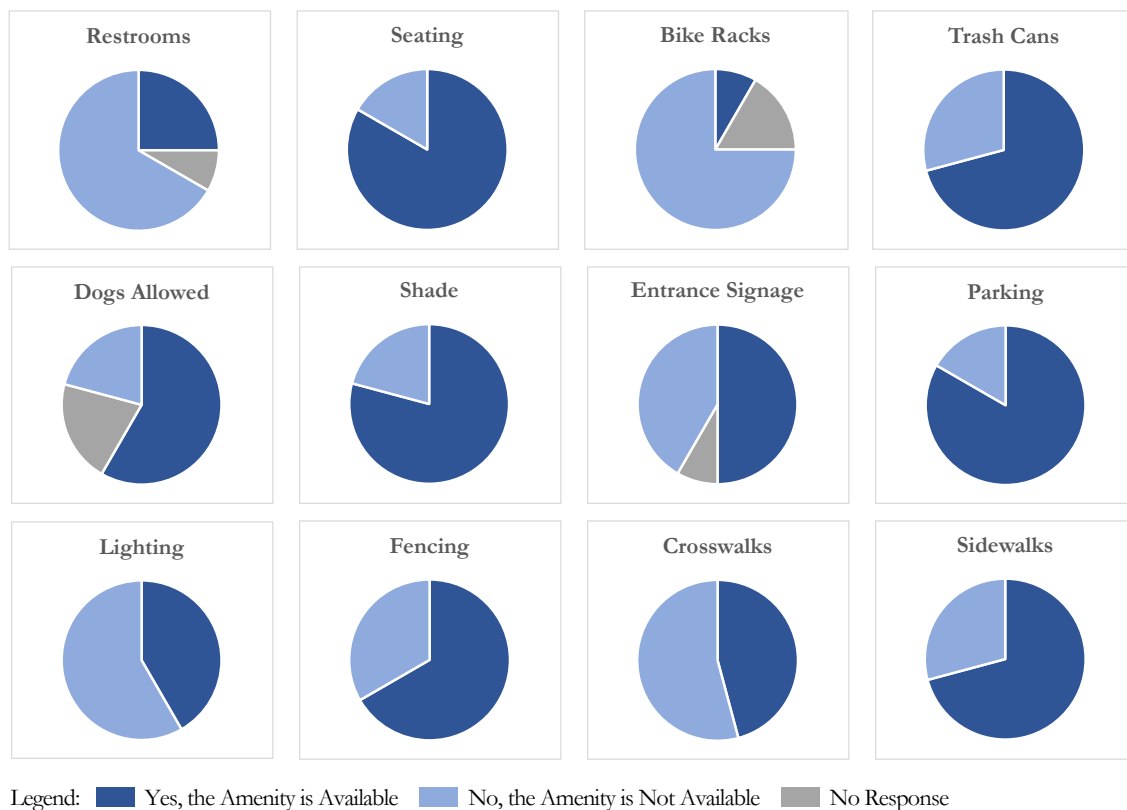
Site Assessments

Based on feedback received during the outreach and engagement process, the consulting team was able to identify 24 of the lesser known parks and/or recreational facilities. Data analyses indicated that these sites did not receive as much public input as some of the other more popular parks and facilities such as Henry Law and the indoor pool. To have an accurate and comprehensive inventory of all the parks and recreation sites in the City, individual site assessments were conducted at these locations.

Site assessment data was collected by consulting staff, city staff, and members of both the Steering Committee and the Trails Advisory Committee. An assessment form was used to collect data on each site's facilities and characteristics (restrooms, seating, bike racks, parking, etc.), overall safety (lighting, fencing, crosswalks, etc.), and any general maintenance and improvements that were needed (broken playground equipment, graffiti, erosion issues, etc.). The raw data was then standardized so it could be analyzed more easily.

Figure 9: Park Amenities at the 24 Site Assessment Locations displays the data collection results of the facilities and characteristics, and safety sections of the assessment form.

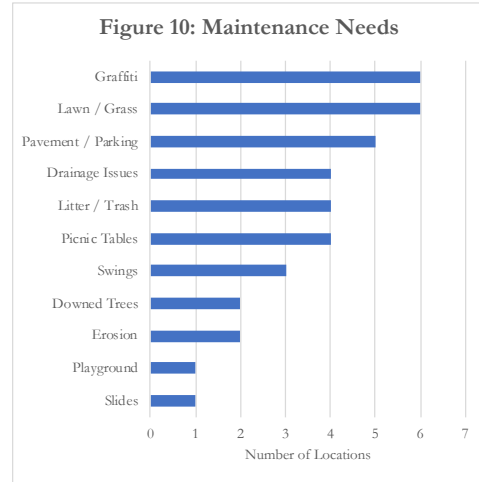
Figure 9: Park Amenities at the 24 Site Assessment Locations



Results from the assessments indicate that most parks have amenities such as seating, trash cans, shade, and parking; however, improvements to the availability of restrooms, better signage, and the allowance of dogs are opportunities to enhance these areas. Most parks provide safe access with sidewalks and fencing, while the installation of additional lighting and nearby crosswalks may be general recommendations to improve the overall feeling of safety at some of these sites.

Figure 10 outlines the maintenance needs identified as part of the site assessments. Graffiti, lawn/grass (which in some cases could include wood chips), and paved parking areas were the most identified needs for future maintenance, repair, or replacement.

While it is important to note that only 24 of the 39 City-owned parks, fields, and facilities (there is a total of 72 recreation sites in Dover) were given a full site assessment, it is likely that the data provides enough of a sample size to predict that the issues and challenges in these parks are widespread throughout the City. Additional site and maintenance assessments will be needed to ensure that all parks are safe, accessible, and properly maintained. Decision makers should consider operation and maintenance, as well as inspection costs when discussing the City's long-range budget projections and appropriate staffing allocations.



For additional details, copies of the completed assessment sheets can be found in Appendix C.



Section 3: Public Engagement

This section describes the process for and results of a widespread public outreach campaign. That information will allow the City to prioritize and implement a broad range of recommendations that reflect the views and needs of a diverse citizenry.

One of the City's top priorities in its master plan process is the utilization of an extensive public engagement plan. This plan was designed to ensure that feedback was received in a variety of ways from the community.

That goal was achieved through a thoughtful process. It offered a variety of opportunities for the public to provide feedback regarding the City's recreation system and how it integrated public art within their community. The public art component was included in this chapter to complement the City's recreational assets and to explore how these two elements can be integrated.

The outreach approach was largely driven by guidance from the Master Plan Steering Committee and City staff. Their feedback and participation were instrumental in ensuring there was input, investment, and ownership of this process. The campaign began with the creation and distribution of two surveys. One asked about public art and the other about recreation spaces and services. They were circulated electronically through the City's website, Dover Download, school system communications, and other media channels. Copies were made available at various City buildings and several local businesses in the downtown. Steering Committee members then attended several outreach events capitalizing on existing community happenings, including Apple Harvest Day, Downtown Trick-or-Treat, and two of Dover's Art Walks.

Nearly 1,200 people were engaged during this process, including input from roughly 740 participants at one of the four events, and over 440 individuals who responded to the public art or recreation surveys.

Outreach events were organized to allow consulting staff the ability to establish a feedback loop to incorporate the opinions and views from the public into future events. Initial responses at one event were used to inform and adapt subsequent engagement activities and outreach.

Methods

Several methods of engagement were incorporated at each event to efficiently reach and engage the maximum number of people

Public Art and Park Amenity Visual Preference Survey

Visual preference surveys were used to gauge interest in proposed concepts for public art and park amenities. The public art visual preference survey invited participants to use stickers to select their top five art concepts from 25 different options that included murals, sculptures, nature-based, performance and interactive, and other art forms. The park amenities visual preference survey asked participants to choose their four favorites from among 25 items related to restrooms, seating, and bike rentals.



Dover Trick-or-Treat Event
[Photo Credit: Strafford Regional Planning]

Section 3

Recreation Preferences Poster Exercise

The “recreation preferences and open-ended poster” exercise was used to gauge how much participants knew about the existing recreation opportunities in Dover. The goal of the exercise was to determine which parks people had heard of and used most frequently, and which parks they were unfamiliar with. Participants were asked to place dot stickers on the parks they used the most. They were encouraged to answer an open-ended question, “What do you like to do there?” Answers were written on a small post-it note and added to the poster. They were also asked to put a dot in a specific column if they had never heard of a certain park location.



Dream Park Design

The “design your dream park” activity encouraged children to create their own public spaces. Their input and insight is valuable because they are often the primary users of parks and recreational facilities. Children’s input was a vital component to the development of this chapter. A park template was designed, and stickers were printed representing twenty different park activities and amenities including team sports, rock climbing, bicycling, kayaking, fishing, sledding, splash pad, ice skating, and playgrounds. Children and their parents were asked to choose their four favorite amenities and place them on their park. They were then prompted to write their name, favorite park, and age.



Chalkboard Exercise

A large chalkboard was used at several outreach events to pose different types of open-ended questions for participants to answer. Examples of questions included:

- “What would make recreation in Dover even better?”
- “What recreation programs would you like to see?”
- “Tell us where you’d like to see public art.”



Online Surveys

Two online surveys, one focused on recreation and one focused on public art, were launched in September 2019. They were available online for a period of two months, and were publicized in a variety of ways including:

- Dover’s weekly e-communication, Dover Download, and via its social media
- Strafford Regional Planning Commission’s e-communications and via its social media
- Posts on the “Unofficial Dover” Facebook group
- The Superintendent’s e-communications to parents
- A QR Code link on business card-sized handouts that were distributed at city, the City Clerk’s station in City Hall, recreation sites and at Apple Harvest Day
- Press releases in the local paper
- Announcements at public meetings

The recreation survey asked participants to identify concerns with the parks and recreation facilities. It asked about future improvements, amenities they enjoyed, and their overall impressions of the City’s

recreation programming. The public art survey measured the level of community support for art, preferred media, potential locations, and themes that could be conveyed through installations or events.

Art Renderings

By using feedback from participants gathered earlier in the engagement process, eight artistic renderings were created to help visualize public art options throughout the City. A score card was given to participants, which included a heart icon (*love it*), a thumbs up icon (*like it*), a thumbs down icon (*dislike it*), and a person shrugging emoji (*no opinion*), so they could express their feelings about each rendering. The card also included free space for people to write comments.

The eight renderings included:

- A painted crosswalk across Orchard Street
- A banner on the streetlight near Thirsty Moose Pizza
- A mural superimposed on the backside of the Ear Craft Music building
- Colored lights on the Cochecho Falls
- A light up staircase leading to the Dover Community Trail by the Silver Street Tunnel
- A redesign of the Rotary Arts Pavilion
- A mural painted on the existing Rotary Arts Pavilion
- Sculptures along the Dover Community Trail



Public Art Prioritization Poster

Locations suggested for future public art installations, generated earlier in the process, were used to create a public art prioritization poster. This poster gathered additional input regarding the most desired spaces for adding public art. People were asked to choose their top three preferences from a list of eleven proposed sites. The poster also had space for people to write additional suggestions.

Events

Using the methods outlined in the previous section, the consulting team, in conjunction with City staff and members of the Steering Committee, facilitated opportunities for input at four different events.



October's Dover Art Walk

The Dover Art Walk, which is a monthly event coordinated by a subcommittee of Dover Main Street, was a well-attended and valuable event. It provided specific feedback from both the artists and the art viewing community. Close to 70 people participated in one of the visual survey activities that included the public art visual preference survey, and the recreation sticker dot and open-ended poster exercise. The chalkboard open-ended exercise had an event specific prompt: "Tell us where you'd like to see public art."



QR code links were passed out on business card-sized handouts so that people would be reminded to take the online surveys.

Apple Harvest Day

This annual event attracts an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 guests to Dover from all over the region. Given the diversity of people, this was a great opportunity to talk with both residents and visitors about the existing recreation and public art opportunities in Dover, and new ideas on how to improve them.

Located adjacent to the Recreation Department's booth, consulting staff and volunteers from the Dover Community Trail Advisory Committee worked together to guide over 200 participants through the various outreach activities. Activities included the public art visual preference survey, the recreation sticky dot and open-ended poster exercise, and the chalkboard open-ended exercise with the prompts "What would make recreation in Dover even better?" and "What recreation programs would you like to see in Dover?"



Apple Harvest Day, 2019
[Photo Credit: Strafford Regional Planning]

The staff and volunteers handed out QR code links on business card-sized handouts so that people would be reminded to take the online surveys.

Downtown Trick-or-Treat

Downtown Trick-Or-Treat, an event put on each year by Dover Main Street, provided an opportunity for both children and their parents to participate in the outreach process. A booth was strategically located at the starting location for the event where all the families stopped to get their candy totes. Consulting staff dressed up in Halloween costumes, handed out candy, and played spooky music.



Downtown Trick-or-Treat
[Photo Credit: Strafford Regional Planning]

Two outreach techniques were utilized at the booth: the Dream Park Design sticker activity and the Park Amenities Visual Preference Survey. Roughly 150 children, with help from their parents, participated in creating their dream parks and a total of 250 people participated in the visual preference survey regarding their favorite park amenities.

November's Dover Art Walk

Consulting staff attended a second art walk event in November to create a feedback loop. This allowed results from the online surveys and the public art prioritization poster and feedback received through various outreach events to be used to inform the art renderings. Close to 50 new participants submitted comment cards with their input.

City Hall Feedback Opportunity

Renderings of the public art prioritization posters were left outside the City Clerk's office after the November Dover Art Walk. This was done to encourage citizens to interact with them while they waited in line at City Hall. More than 20 individuals provided additional input.



November Art Walk
[Photo Credit: Strafford Regional Planning]

Outcomes

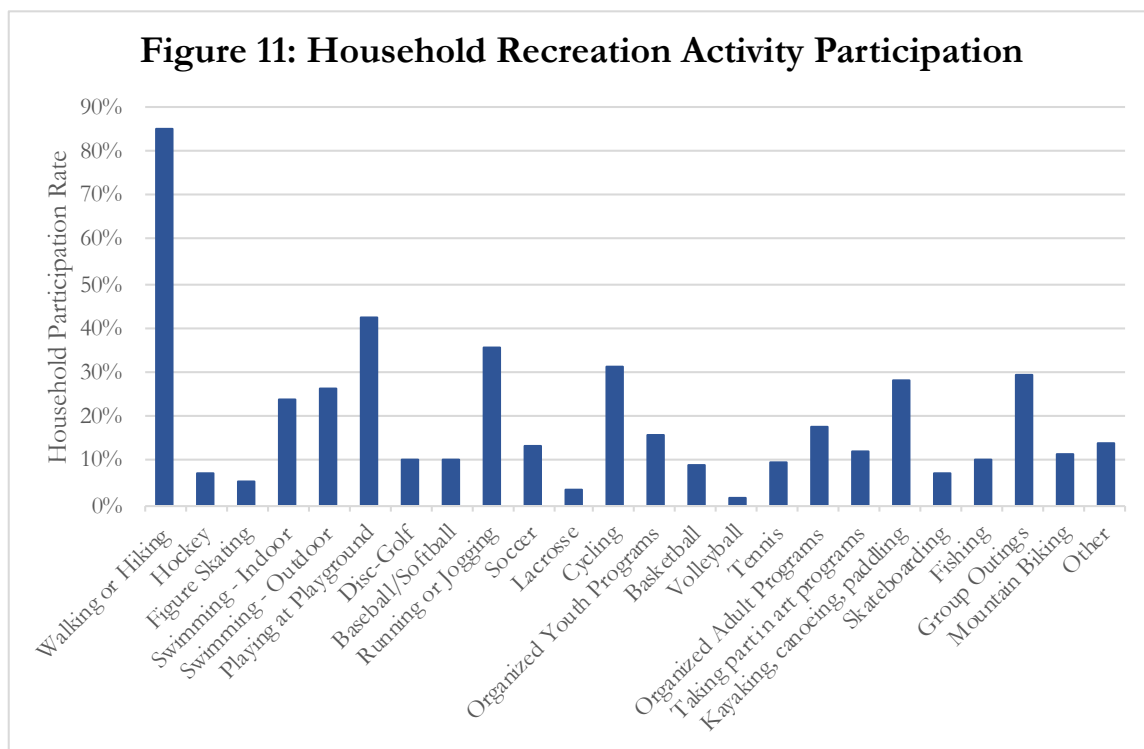
All feedback received throughout this process shaped the Chapter revisions. Input was sorted, analyzed, and summarized within the Chapter's two overarching elements –recreation facilities and programming and public art. The outcomes fit into the revision framework of the Chapter and accurately reflect the views of Dover's residents. The outcomes show that the relationship between parks and recreation space and public art positively influence the quality of life in Dover.

Recreation Facilities and Programming

Results from the outreach process suggest that most residents express positive sentiments and overall satisfaction with the amount of recreation opportunities in the City. The following sections describe several major themes that came up most frequently through the engagement process. The full listing of every response received is included as Appendix B at the end of this chapter.

WALKING AND PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE AND SAFETY

One of the most common activities identified during the outreach was walking. Survey results, depicted in Figure 11, indicate that over 80 percent of respondents had gone for a walk or a hike within the past 12 months, which was significantly higher than any other activity. Residents voiced support for pedestrian infrastructure and safety improvements. This includes improving the connection between trail networks and expanding trail systems, ensuring safer intersections and crosswalks, installing clearer signage and better lighting, increasing police presence on the most widely used trails and walking routes (e.g. Community Trail), and expanding sidewalks.



ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

Results show a public desire to increase the visibility of existing resources, amenities, and programming. There was an overwhelming number of responses stating, “I don’t know where to find information.” This implies that there is significant need for a central gateway where all programming and opportunities are accessible. Dover has excellent recreation offerings, and it is critical that the City

improve its approach towards informing the public about them. Frequently suggested ideas include physical signage; maps and information; a website to host recreation sites, amenities, and programming; and an enhanced social media presence.

MULTI-GENERATIONAL AND SOCIAL PROGRAMMING

There was frequent request that the City increase options for more multi-generational programming. This suggests a general desire for park and recreation facilities to address the needs of a range of population groups. Playgrounds are used by young children; their parents/guardians, and grandparents. All these age groups need to be considered as users when making capital improvement decisions. Achieving long-term success is centered on ensuring that the recreation system is inclusive, accessible, and serves everybody. Specific suggestions that came up throughout the engagement process included: provide more seating with shade; increase group activity offerings for adults and seniors (nature guides, pickleball, tennis, kayaking, etc.); increase activities and programs for young children not yet in school; host more organized hikes, walks, and cycling events; provide more evening programs and classes; identify and publicize activities for those with disabilities; and offer programs that make it easier for residents to meet more or new people.

LIGHTING

Lighting that adds functionality, safety, and a sense of welcome to public facilities was another major theme. The public suggested several locations that could benefit from improved lighting, including Shaw's Lane fields, the Community Trail, most playgrounds, tennis and basketball courts, as well as general lighting improvements for running or walking at night in areas outside the downtown.

POOLS

The public expressed the clear need for the City to invest in a family-friendly outdoor pool or aquatic center. The Jenny Thompson Pool, the one existing outdoor pool, is primarily used for competitive and recreational swimming and does not offer the amenities needed to attract young children and their families; the splashpad at Henry Law acts as a heat-friendly public space and provides a small water playground for children. Yet, there is a common desire for a family-friendly outdoor pool venue that offers features to attract young children and their families, as well as those seeking to swim laps for exercise.

Pool suggestions and concepts include general updates to the indoor and outdoor pools; increased lap times and staff capacity at the indoor pool; and additional lesson options and aquatic fitness classes (e.g. water aerobics).



PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS

Parks and playgrounds are widely used and a significant part of Dover's recreation system. There are two tot lots, four pocket parks, six neighborhood parks, thirteen community parks, three elementary school playgrounds, and the middle and high school athletic fields. Many of these are within walking distance from a large portion of the City. The new playground at Henry Law Park is a good example of this as it has proved to be a fantastic resource. It has become a popular destination for both residents and visitors.



Results from the outreach process suggest that the City's parks and playgrounds may be used more often if the following elements were introduced or enhanced: improved lighting, increases in safety and maintenance inspections, inclusion of multi-generational equipment (e.g. expression swings, musical instruments, outdoor adult fitness park), additional seating choices, more shade options (natural or man-made), and alternatives to woodchips for ground surfacing.

PARK AMENITIES

Throughout the engagement process, there were several opportunities for participants to provide feedback on the types of park amenities they would like to see. The following is a consolidated list of some of the top park amenities that were identified

- Bathrooms
- Splash pads
- Lighting
- Rock-climbing options
- Downtown dog park
- Public art
- Hammocks and adult-sized swings
- Kayak rentals
- Signage
- Cross-country ski trails and rentals
- Indoor pickleball
- Music offerings

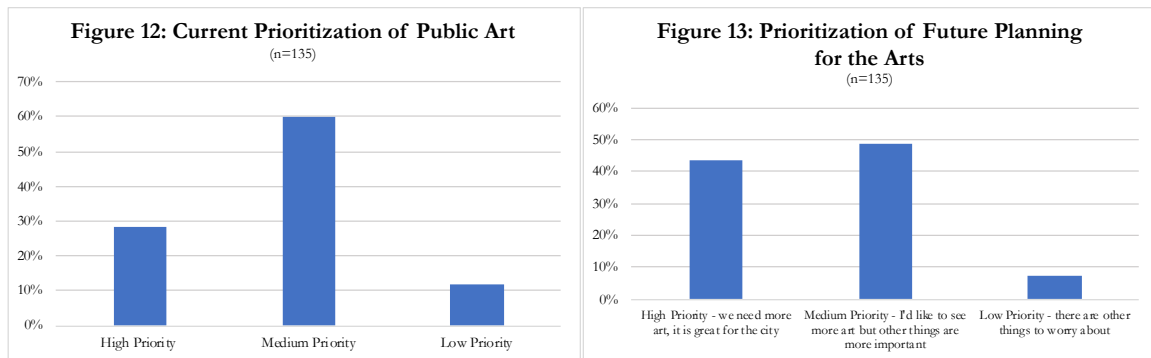
A family-friendly water park and an outdoor skating rink were two of the highest ranked priorities that went above and beyond incremental park amenity improvements and would require a substantial city investment.



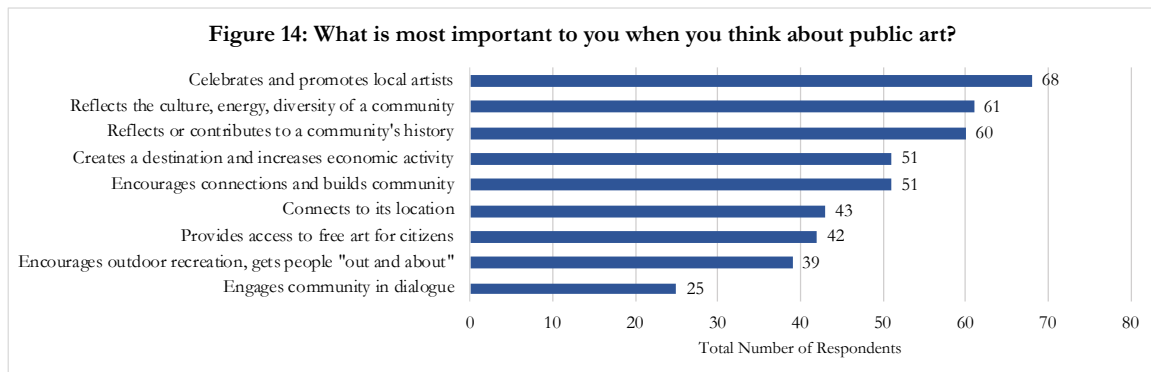
Public Art

The incorporation of public art into this Chapter was a new element not included in the previous editions. The outreach campaign invested a significant amount of time and effort to gather information on current and potential public art locations, as well as popular art themes, media, and concepts.

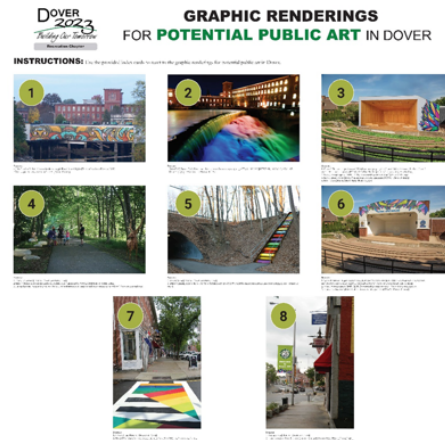
The online survey measured general perceptions towards the City's support for public art. The results of current priorities are summarized in Figure 12. Close to 30 percent of respondents felt that Dover currently places a high priority on public art, with another 60 percent responding that the City places a medium priority on public art. Figure 13 summarizes future planning priorities where 44 percent of respondents felt that public art should be a high priority for the City and 49 percent noted that it should be a medium priority with the understanding that the City has more important responsibilities to deal with.



When asked about future public art planning efforts, the highest number of respondents said public art installations and events should celebrate and promote local artists, reflect the culture, energy, diversity of the community, and reflect or contribute to their community's history (Figure 14).



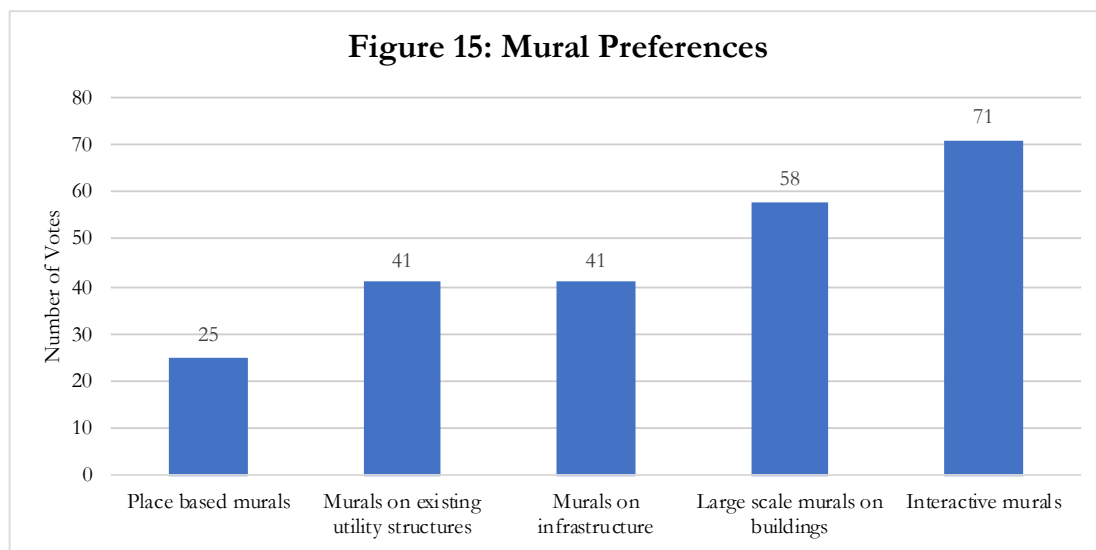
Residents who had the opportunity to provide feedback on the graphic renderings poster, which was prominently displayed at the November Art Walk and City Hall, were most excited about numerous options. Examples include sculpture options along the Community Trail, a mural on the back of the Ear Craft building, lights at Cochecho Falls, and the light up staircase leading to the Dover Community Trail by the Silver Street Tunnel. The least support was for the modern rendition of the Rotary Arts Pavilion.



When asked to identify their favorite kind of art, respondents selected murals, entertainment and cultural events, sculptures, and natural or nature-based projects.

MURALS

Murals ranked as the highest choice for public art, drawing over 400 positive responses. The 9-11 mural on Broadway, Ear Craft building on First Street, backside of the Thirsty Moose on Orchard Street, Pontiac Logo on Central Ave, Strafford Bank, and the Community Trail tunnel were identified as existing murals that residents enjoyed.



In 2019, the Planning Board required public art installations in the form of murals on two projects—333 Central Avenue (facing Henry Law Park) and 104 Washington replacing an otherwise blank wall on Chestnut Street.

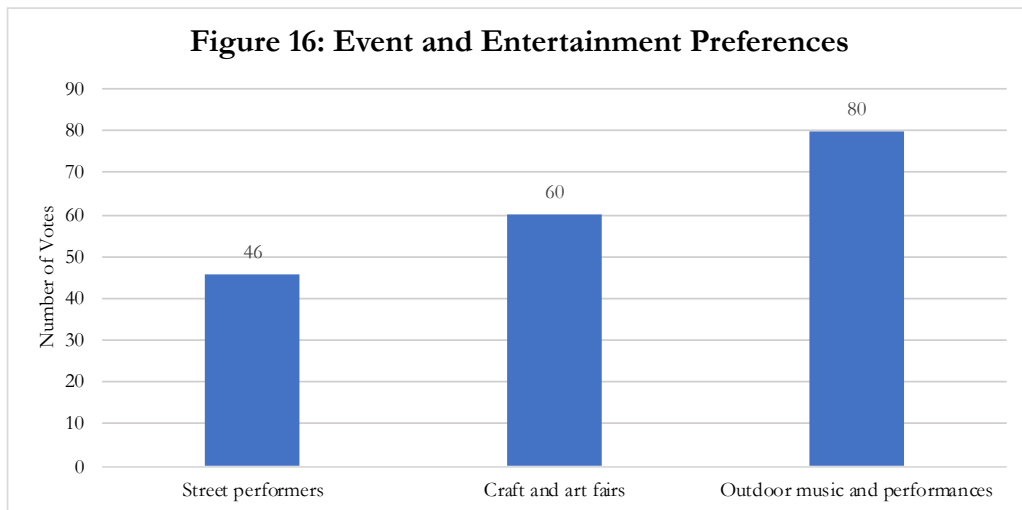
Results from the Public Art Visual Preference Survey and the in-person outreach events indicated that interactive murals, or murals where a person becomes part of the art, was the most popular (see Nashville, TN example on the next page). This was followed by large scale murals on buildings and on existing utility structures. Dover’s history (e.g. America’s first women’s strike, shipbuilding along the Cochecho River, and manufacturing cotton goods in the Mills) was a popular mural theme. (Refer to Figure 15)

Suggested locations for future murals included using the sides of either public or private buildings. It was acknowledged that any mural on a private building would be at the discretion of the owner and subject to conformance with the Zoning Ordinance. The City of Dover, as a policy, will accept and review all applications from area artists for installations within or upon public buildings. Applications are reviewed by the Dover Arts Commission and City Manager, and upon their favorable recommendation forwarded to the City Council for approval. Additionally, the City’s Zoning Ordinance and Architectural Design Guidelines encourage public art to be integrated within the streetscape and as part of street furniture. Reoccurring suggestions included the walls near Sonny’s and La Festa, back of the Ear Craft building, and a wall near Adelle’s, the chimney stack at the Cochecho Mills, and the Orchard Street public parking garage.



ENTERTAINMENT AND CULTURAL EVENTS

Entertainment and cultural events were another popular art form that received a large amount of support garnering nearly 420 responses (233 of these responses were direct answers to an online survey question). The Cochecho Arts Festival (live music in the park, dinner and movie series, farmers market, art walk, etc.), events at the Strand Theatre, and art events sponsored by the Woodman Institute were several initiatives mentioned most during the outreach process.

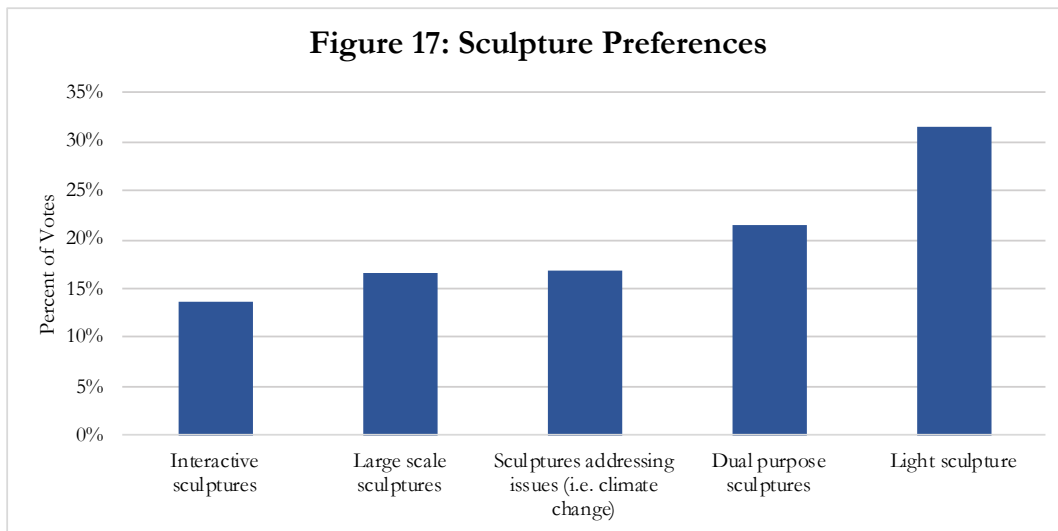


The Public Art Visual Preference Survey and in-person outreach events results depicted in Figure 16 show that out of the 186 responses in the events and entertainment preference category, 80 votes, or 43 percent, were cast for outdoor music and performances. Respondents felt there were opportunities for more programming at both the Rotary Arts Pavilion and the new high school auditorium. Suggestions included concerts with varying music genres, upgrades to the Rotary Arts Pavilion, the return of “Riverfront Movie Nights”, and growing the art walk to include shops being open later in the night.

SCULPTURES

There were 388 responses related to sculptures like Whale’s Tale on the roof of the indoor pool or the blue crab at the Children’s Museum of New Hampshire, as place they enjoyed visiting.

Figure 17: Sculpture Preferences from the Public Art Visual Preference Survey and the in-person outreach events show that out of the 285 votes in the sculpture preference category, 90 votes (32 percent of responses in this category) were interested in light sculptures (see University of Houston, TX example). Dual purpose sculptures (see Roanoke, VA example) received the next highest number of votes, followed by those that seek to bring attention to social issues such as climate change, drug abuse, and homelessness.

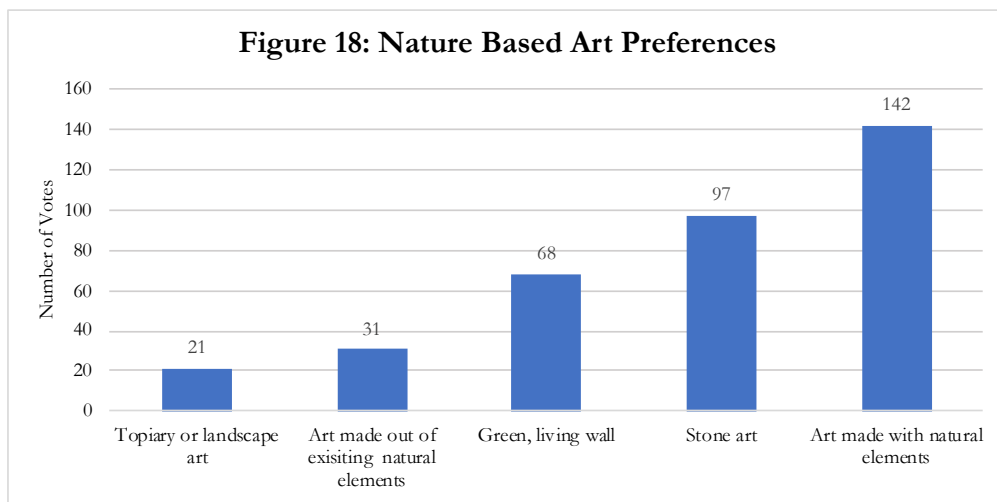


Outreach results demonstrate the public's desire for water fountains, sculptures throughout the City (e.g. Paying homage to the birthplace of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles with sculptures around several of the pizza places in the City were mentioned as a fun idea), as well as a designated sculpture trail or garden.

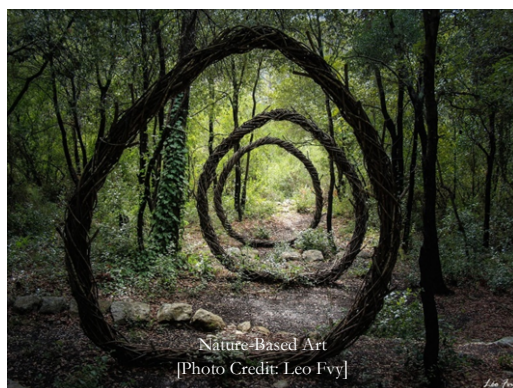


NATURAL OR NATURE-BASED

Figure 18: regarding art made with or from natural elements had 359 favorable public arts visual preference survey responses. Examples of nature-based art include installations made with natural elements, stone art, green walls, art made from existing natural elements, and topiary or landscape art. Of those, roughly 40 percent of responses (142 votes) were in favor of art made with natural elements.



Examples from the online survey and the in-person outreach events included the development of a unified theme at all the garden spots throughout the City and using Henry Law Park at the location for a water fountain and a larger garden similar to Prescott Park in Portsmouth. Participants also noted new developments near the downtown as opportunities to incorporate additional green space.

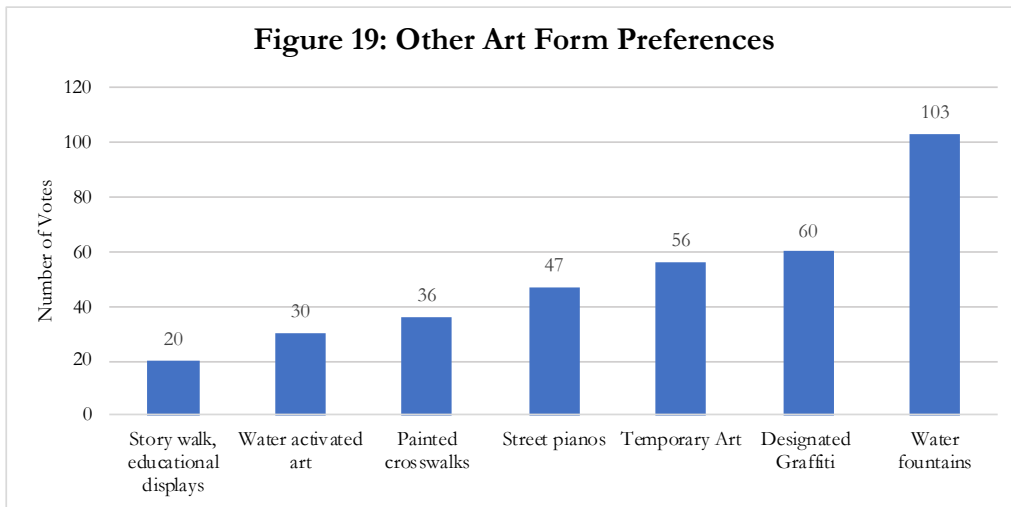


OTHER ART FORMS

Water fountains received the second the greatest number of votes overall, following art made with natural elements. Within the suggested other art forms, it received nearly a third of the votes. Designated graffiti also fell into the top ten vote recipients, earning 60 votes overall, 17 percent of the other art form votes. Temporary art also rated well with a total of 56 votes. Refer to Figure 19 for the full results of other art form preferences.

ART LOCATIONS

A large component of the outreach was to obtain feedback on the most desirable locations for future public art installations. Results indicated that most art location suggestions were centered around downtown and along primary transportation corridors; however, there were some respondents that proposed additional public art in some of the outlying neighborhood areas to encourage residents and visitors to explore outside the downtown.



A significant number of respondents felt that public art should be located on the sides of public and private buildings. This was mostly related to the large interest in murals. Respondents noted that there should be more public art located in Dover parks, specifically identifying Henry Law Park, Fish Ladder Park, and Garrison Hill Park as excellent candidate sites. Along the river was another popular location with respondents citing the new waterfront development, on bridges, at the Cochecho Falls, along the Riverwalk and Joe B. Parks Garden area, and Fish Ladder Park as potential locations for public art. Other suggested locations include the Community Trail (under the Route 16 overpass north of Whittier Street and on the trestle bridge), Dover area schools, and adjacent to the Public Library.

Respondents suggested highlighting walking paths with artistic signage, much like the Boston Freedom Trail in the way it uses guides on sidewalks to attract people to different attractions. For Dover, this could highlight museums and other cultural amenities.

